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OVERSIGHT ON ILLITERACY IN THE UNITED STATES

ORIGINAL

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETY-NINTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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HEARING HELD IN WASHINGTON, DC, MARCH 20, 1986

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OVERSIGHT ON ILLITERACY IN THE UNITED STATES

THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 1986

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY,
AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION,
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 9.30 a.m., in room 2175, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Augustus F. Hawkins (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Members present: Representatives Hawkins, Goodling, and Fawell.

Also present: Senator Edward Zorinsky.

Staff present: John F. Jennings, counsel; Nancy L. Kober, legislative specialist; and Andrew Hartman, Republican legislative associate.

Chairman HAWKINS. The Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education is called to order.

This morning the subcommittee continues its oversight hearings on illiteracy.

We are very pleased to have with the subcommittee this morning a distinguished Member of the Senate, Senator Zorinsky, who more than any other individual, I think, prompted this particular hearing and who is very active on this issue in the Senate. We are very delighted, Senator Zorinsky, to have you present this morning, and we know other members will be joining us. But I know this subject is one which is very close to your heart and certainly one that you have devoted a tremendous amount of time to.

So, insofar as possible, we will give you the major attention today, because we know of your continuing interest in this subject.

Mr. Goodling, the ranking minority member, is also present.

The Chair has no oral statement, at this time although I do have a written one which I will forego and ask that it be entered in the record at this point.

[The opening statement of Hon. Augustus F. Hawkins follows.]

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. AUGUSTUS F. HAWKINS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

This morning the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education is continuing its inquiry into the issue of illiteracy. We began this endeavor last year with a series of joint hearings with the Senate, in which we examined the extent and nature of the problem, some contributing factors, and some possible solutions.

One of the witnesses last year was our colleague Senator Zorinsky, who has been a leader on the issue of illiteracy in the other body. Senator Zorinsky suggested we continue our oversight this year by examining issues related to teaching and learning reading, and I am pleased to be able to accommodate his request. I welcome the Senator this morning, along with our panel of witnesses, several of whom come highly recommended by Senator Zorinsky.

Chairman **Hawkins**. Mr. Goodling, do you care to make a statement at this time?

Mr. **Goodling**. Just very briefly, Mr. Chairman.

This is our fourth hearing that we have held on the subject of illiteracy, and I think the attention we are giving it mirrors the seriousness of this issue as far as the well-being of our Nation is concerned.

The bill you and I have introduced together is a small attempt to make the public aware of how serious the problem is and how destructive it will be if we don't do something about it.

I can only say that I am out there trying to raise $4 billion a year for the next 3 years in the private sector to do something about it. I will tell you more about that later.

I am happy to welcome all of those who are here to testify today on a subject that is probably the most important subject and problem facing the Nation at this time.

Chairman **Hawkins**. Let me call the witnesses at this time to the table. We will hear from each of them, and then question them subsequent to that.

May I indicate to the witnesses that their entire statements will be entered in the record just the same as if they had given them verbatim. We always try to look to the witnesses to confine themselves to the highlights in their statements, so that it will provide more time for communication back and forth between the members and the witnesses.

Several of the witnesses have been invited through the generosity of Senator Zorinsky.

We have Mr. Charles M. Richardson, an electrical engineer, Sperry Corp., education consultant; Mr. Charles J. Micciche, superintendent of schools, Groveton, NH; Mrs. Sally Queal, special education instructor, Gosnell Senior High School, Blytheville, AR; Mrs. Ann Mactier, a member of the Board of Education, Omaha, NE; and Dr. Dorothy Strickland, professor of education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY.

If any of those witnesses are present, I wish they would come to the table.

While they are assembling at the table, the Chair would like to yield to Senator Zorinsky for any statement that he may care to make at this point.

Senator.

Senator **Zorinsky**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you very much for holding this hearing to address the issue that I have raised, which is the prevention of illiteracy.

Mr. Chairman, without your cooperation, certainly I, from the other body, would not have been able to pursue this hearing with you jointly on the House side this morning. So, for that I thank you very, very much, and the ranking member of your committee also.

I also want to thank the witnesses and the students who have come here today.

Mr. Richardson, Mr. Micciche, Ms. Queal, and Ms. Mactier are representative of the hundreds of persons who have contacted me from around the country. They are here at their own expense because they want to share their successful experiences with you, and they can dramatically demonstrate how schools can spend less money and get better results.

The majority of our schools are not using proven methods of teaching reading, as evidenced by the report of the Commission on Reading, "Becoming a Nation of Readers." Ironically, almost all of the basal programs sold by the large publishers are more expensive and less effective than other methods which will be described here today.

All too frequently in the initial stages of instruction they require memorization of whole words instead of giving children the key to sounding out new words through phonics. And no matter how they advertise themselves, they are not in line with the commission's recommendations.

The damage being done by the use of the whole word or look-say method was illustrated in the testimony of Renee Poussaint and the adult education student, Woodrow Evans, at one of your earlier hearings.

I have attached a copy of the portion of the hearing record to which I am referring. Their testimony clearly indicates how our schools are creating illiterates and we must ask why they continue to use these type of ineffective methods.

Dr. John Manning, the president of the International Reading Association, also testified at an earlier hearing. He does not support the use of phonics, and in fact has been a paid consultant to Scott-Foresman, a leading publisher of basal programs, since at least 1978, if not earlier. I believe this is a clear conflict of interest.

In "The Great American Reading Machine," Prof. David Yarington blames our reading ills on interlocking self-interests of national, State, and local education departments; publishers; particularly of basal readers; education professors; and unsuspecting teachers. He says, "It is a billion dollar feeding trough, and no one with a nose in it has any notion of coming up for air to say so."

Apparently we cannot leave reform efforts up to the educators, so we must get involved. And if we are serious about addressing the problems of illiteracy, we must look into its causes. We must work toward a solution instead of being part of the problem.

Even with the publication of "Becoming a Nation of Readers," schools are not jumping on the bandwagon to improve their methods of teaching reading. I believe this is because they still do not have sufficient information to choose the best ones.

The need for this information was evidenced by the response received by the Reading Reform Foundation in Scottsdale, AZ, after a footnote in a Reader's Digest article last fall mentioned them as a source for material on teaching reading by phonics. They were immediately inundated with inquiries, and as of this date have received over 25,000 requests for their materials.

I am revising my illiteracy legislation to require the Department of Education to compile specific information on what does and does not work in the teaching of reading, and I believe it will be in a form that you and your committee can support, Mr. Chairman.

Again, I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the spirit of cooperation which you and Nancy Kober of your staff have displayed. I look forward to working with you on this issue to achieve the results that we both desire.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The material referred to above follows:]

FROM THE STATEMENT OF RENEE POUSSAINT, WJLA-TV, WASHINGTON, DC

I became a tutor with the Operation Rescue Program in Washington, DC, run jointly by the D.C. Public Schools and the Washington Urban League. In its 5 years of existence, some 3,000 elementary students have been tutored in math and reading with the help of some 700 volunteers.

Rather than getting into generalizations, let me use a specific example of one little boy I tutored during last spring semester. His name is Donnell. He was in the third grade but reading on the first grade level. Like many kids who need tutoring, Donnell was not inherently incapable of learning. He was not stupid, nor was he economically deprived.

Donnell's reading difficulty was that he saw no pattern, no connection between the letters in one word and the way they appear in another. Every word was a brand new puzzle. If his class worked on reading a story, Donnell would memorize certain isolated words in that story, like hat; but if he later saw the word cat, a seemingly equally simple word, he would not have the vaguest idea of what it meant, of how the sounds of certain letters could give you consistent clues to reading any word, even if you had not seen it before. To Donnell, such an idea was totally incomprehensible.

So once we established the idea of trust, I began working on basic letter sounds, phonics, over and over again, making sure that we never went on to new words or stories until I was certain Donnell really understood and had not simply memorized isolated words, trying to bluff his way through as so many illiterates do.

Then my wife suggested for me to join this adult program, and I had doubt when I first joined. But after joining, I started finding out things that I never did when I was going to school, to begin with. For instance, I never was taught the sounds of letters or vowels. I knew nothing about it. So if you can put a word in front of me, it was impossible for me to read it.

Chairman HAWKINS. Thank you, Senator.

Mr. Richardson, we will hear from you first.

STATEMENTS OF CHARLES M. RICHARDSON, ELECTRICAL ENGINEER, SPERRY CORP., EDUCATION CONSULTANT AND FORMER READING TUTOR; CHARLES J. MICCICHE, SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, GROVETON, NH; SALLY QUEAL, SPECIAL EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR, GOSNELL SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, BLYTHEVILLE, AR, ACCOMPANIED BY TRACY WILLYARD, LITERACY PROGRAM PARTICIPANT; ANN MACTIER, MEMBER, BOARD OF EDUCATION, OMAHA, NE, ACCOMPANIED BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS; AND DR. DOROTHY STRICKLAND, PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION, TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, NY

Mr. RICHARDSON. Thank you, Chairman Hawkins, Senator Zorinsky, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen.

It is indeed an honor to speak to you on this occasion where everyone is tuned in on education, and especially on literacy.

Substantial portions of our country are also tuned in, and I can speak as a member of the work force of the Sperry Corp. which supports the improvement of basic skills across the board.

Besides being a professional engineer, I also hold permanent teaching certificates in secondary math, physics and general science, elementary education and special education.

My involvement in education began in 1970, when I opened a franchised learning center, and since that time, these last 15 years, I have dealt with over 2,500 students on an individual diagnosis and prescription basis dealing with all levels of subject matter from first grade through adult, and English, math, and reading.

What I see in all of these persons as I test them first, I see the damaging effects of poor teaching practices, poor school management, and I feel that most of them would not have been remedial had they been taught properly in the first place.

So, this and other experiences have led me to think that somebody else has to get involved, somebody outside of the education community. And, I think, the greatest hope for the expertise in both management and scientific insight would come from the business community and the technical community.

By technical community, I am talking about technical societies such as the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers, who are very interested in precollege education.

As far as the money aspect of education is concerned, we are all concerned about the money going into education, and, I think, our country has been very generous.

If you dig out the figures on gross national product over the past 35 years and the costs of public education, you will find that education's share has just about tripled in those years. If these trends continue, by the year 2060 education can spend the entire gross national product. There is a graph in my submitted testimony that shows how you can arrive at that conclusion.

But with all that input, we now can see that money alone is not the answer, that we have to ask if our education dollars are being properly spent.

With all of the sagging SAT scores and the difficulties with the illiterates filling our jails and our welfare rolls, I know that this is something which is of definite concern.

An engineer has sometimes been defined as one who can do for 2 shillings what any damn fool can do for 1 pound. So, we have to ask, how can we optimize education dollars.

The business community's interests, of course, are looking into cause and effect relationships and looking for not only a pool of skilled employees but a literate public who understand the technology in our culture.

We can mostly ask that education abide by its own best research, its own best technologies, and ask why is there such a reluctance of educators to look at what is happening with their own research.

Why is so much good material being ignored?

In 1984, at education conferences which were organized by these technical societies, there were two science educators reporting that both at elementary school levels and at secondary levels there was much interference by inadequate reading skills and remedial reading programs to the promotion of science education. And yet not one of those educators suggested that any remedial action be taken looking at the reading situation.

We are also concerned about high school dropouts. If you look at the National Center for Education Statistics' data which has been put out just this past year, you can see that the reasons given by students for dropping out are very largely related to academic failure.

Five times as many drop out from the bottom quartile in academic standing as from the top. Those students who are in vocational programs drop out five times faster than students who are in educational academic programs.

So, for high school dropouts, we are looking for some means to prevent or reduce academic failure. And in the realm of academic failure, what one subject is both the key element and the biggest sticky-wicket? It is reading. So, if we attack the reading problem, we are also going to be looking at a way to improve the high school dropout problem.

It has been said by the past reports that Senator Zorinsky has mentioned, "Becoming a Nation of Readers," and also just within the past month a pamphlet called "What Works in Education" has come out of the Department, emphasizing very strongly that phonics is a component of the reading education which is shown by research to be primarily effective.

Yet four out of five schools in the United States are still doing the opposite, with the basal readers that Senator Zorinsky has described.

We still come back to the question, why do educators bury this reading and literacy problem.

For one kind of reason, if you will look at the testimony that was given in your August 1 hearing by Mr. John Manning, yes, he is the president of the International Reading Association and also a paid consultant to one of the larger publishing houses in educational materials.

This International Reading Association was founded in 1956, coincidentally perhaps, but it was the year right after Rudolf Flesch's blockbusting book, "Why Johnny Can't Read," which was published in 1955.

The IRA at that time was founded by a coalition of people deeply involved in the writing and publishing of whole word reading materials.

This association has, over the years, augmented its influence to where it is virtually the only game in town as far as reading practices and pedagogy. It very largely influences what is taught in the teacher training institutions.

In its publications and in its local and national conventions, it controls what and who gets published, and who gets to make presentations to teachers.

The late Nina Traub, a very well known phonics advocate who won a Federal title IV-C replication grant for her successful phonic-based program called "Recipe for Reading," was put on one IRA convention program in the late 1970's, but given a small room. Her workshop was so heavily attended they had to move her into the main auditorium. And yet she was never asked back to another IRA convention.

Large-scale reading tests which were accomplished in the mid-1960's, primarily called the "27 First Grade Studies," showed overwhelmingly superior results for phonic-based reading systems, and yet in IRA publications these were distorted, derided, and downplayed. They were labeled as infamous and given as reasons for discontinuing the use of such tests for evaluating reading methodologies.

Indeed, with all the controversy over reading, there have been no large-scale studies in the last 20 years.

No one denies that the aim of reading is comprehension, which, of course, requires something beyond phonics in its pure state. It requires vocabulary background information, language experience, and so forth.

But what is not fully appreciated and certainly buried by the look-say advocates is the contribution of phonics to all of those. And in the testimony which I have submitted, there is a diagram which attempts to depict those relationships, a relationship which has really been borne out by the results of past research.

The success of our work force and, indeed, our success as a nation rests on our ability to solve problems.

Now, in the recent international comparisons of students among the industrial nations, areas which are language intensive, problem solving, geometry, all of those kinds of subject matters that require thinking and application of language, the United States has shown up very poorly in comparison with other nations. And I submit that the early instruction in phonics, the analytical reflexes that result as a result of this early linguistic experience, detailing the syllables of words, is a key ingredient of the kind of thinking that affects the ability to absorb all other learning.

So, this is tied in with the math and science effort which is being made in this country to improve math and science.

If we can spend $100 million in math and science education, we might be wasting some of that if we don't attack the literacy problem first.

Many students are spun off into a label called LD, or learning disabled. There is much evidence that these students are victims of poor instruction.

In the supplemental testimony which I intend to submit, there will be a bibliography with references to some of that research.

We cannot really call ourselves a scientific or technological nation if we permit 80 percent of our schools to continue to use reading methods which have repeatedly proven inferior. And with the start that has been made by these last two reports, "Becoming a Nation of Readers," and so forth, they have identified the concept but not sufficiently the detail by which conscientious educators and parents can choose appropriate reading material for their students, for their children.

There is such a mountain of misinformation and ignorance which has been created by the events of the past half century that we need some organization of the good information.

So, I urge the establishment of a study, with legislative oversight, to identify reading programs which use phonics effectively. The study should result in a report describing the characteristics of such programs in a way that parents and educators can use it for selecting reading materials which produce the best results for the greatest proportion of our children.

The study should use existing results wherever possible, existing research. I don't think there is a need to reinvent the wheel. The information is all there. All we have to do is use it.

Thank you very much.

Chairman HAWKINS. Thank you, Mr. Richardson.

[The prepared statement of Charles M. Richardson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHARLES M. RICHARDSON

Chairman Hawkins, Members of the Committee on Education & Labor, ladies and gentlemen. It is an honor to speak on this occasion where everyone is tuned in on education, and especially on literacy. Substantial portions of our country are also tuned in. I speak as a member of the workforce of the Sperry Corporation, which supports the improvement of literacy and basic skills across-the-board, and as a member of the Long Island Forum for Technology (LIFT) and its subcommittee, the Regional Industrial Technical Education Council (RITEC). I am also a member of the Pre-College Education Committee of the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE), the world's largest technical society. I am a trustee of the NY Chapter of the Reading Reform Foundation (RRF), (a literacy organization espousing intensive phonic methods in reading) and of the Feingold Association (advocating nutritional—not drug—treatment for hyperactive children), and a member of the Orton Dyslexia Society and of the Air Force Association. Besides being a Licensed Professional Engineer, I hold permanent teaching certificates in Secondary Math, Physics, and General Science, Elementary Education and Special Education, and have taught education at the college level.

Let me explain how an engineer became involved in education. In 1970 I opened a franchised learning center teaching reading, math, and English at all levels. In the last 16 years, I have dealt with over 2500 students on an individual diagnosis and prescription (mostly remedial) basis. I see at all levels (K - adult) the damaging effects of poor teaching and school management practices, and feel that most of my clients would not have been remedial had they been taught properly in the first place. This (and related experiences) has given me grave doubts about the ability of our educational system to solve its problems without outside help. This help may best come, I believe, from the business and technological communities with their scientific insight and management expertise.

When it comes to money for education, we're all interested; indeed our country has been most generous: A little digging in the World Almanac shows that, since 1950, U.S. expenditures for public education have grown at annual rates about half again faster than our gross national product (GNP). In these 36 years public education has tripled its share of the GNP from 2 percent to about 6 percent. Extrapolation of this data (by computer or logarithmic graph) shows that, should these trends continue, public education will spend the entire GNP by about the year 2060!! (See Figure 1.) But with the rise in expenditures per pupil have come the sagas of the sagging SAT scores, record illiteracy (increasing by 2.3 million persons/year), and somber statistics on the poor scientific and problem-solving abilities of U.S. students in comparisons with Russia, Japan, and other industrialized nations. In geometry we're at the bottom of the heap! Language-intensive subject areas are suffering more than pure computation, despite record sums being spent on remedial reading. The Armed Services are "dumbing down" their manuals to fifth grade levels; corporations are spending $million$ teaching basics which should have been acquired in high school. The pattern of symptoms suggests that either American kids are deficient in language aptitude, or American schools are doing an inadequate job of teaching reading and language. So money alone has shown itself not to be the answer; business and scientific persons are rightfully asking if our education dollars are being properly spent. An engineer has been defined as, "one who can do for two shillings what any damn fool can do for a pound!" In view of the above patterns of money vs results, I suggest it's time to speak of educational system engineering. We need to ask, "What are the connections among the symptoms? Where are the cause-and-effect relationships?"

The business community is interested in pre-college education for two reasons, self-serving to a degree, but ultimately consistent with National interest: (1) The need for a pool of skilled employees, and (2) the need or a technologically literate public in a culture where technology affects our lives to such a great extent, and where lack of public understanding can let abuses of technology deteriorate our environment and our national welfare. The most useful effect of the business community will be its insistence that education employ its own best technologies, abide by the results of its own best research, especially in the area of reading, where there seems to be a problem. Sometimes the reluctance of educators to face the problem is baffling. In 1984, at education conferences organized by the IEEE in concert with other technical societies, two science educators reported that elementary school science was being crowded out by remedial reading programs, and junior high school teachers' most frequent complaint was that science teaching was impeded by inadequate student reading skills. Yet NOT ONE educator suggested that reading be treated as a problem area. Why are educators silent on this issue? You can't solve a problem unless you examine causes. Otherwise you are just confounding confusion with commotion, attacking appendicitis with aspirin. My observations are that there are lots of good empirical data, research results, which are being routinely ignored by educators, particularly in the area of reading.

Many of us are concerned about high school dropouts. A careful reading of the National Center for Educational Statistics surveys shows that the majority of high school dropouts are related to academic failure. The reasons given by students for dropping out, and the fact that 5 times as many drop out from the bottom fourth of academic standing than from the top fourth, and that more drop out of vocational programs than out of academics, all tell the same story. Remedies must obviously be measures to prevent or reduce academic failure. And in the realm of academic failure what one subject is both key element and biggest sticky wicket? Reading! So, if we attack the reading problem we'll have a leg up on the high school dropout problem.

The crucial issue is phonics in beginning reading. The experimental evidence in favor of teaching phonics first and intensively is consistent in over 124 studies during the past 50 years. The most respected researchers, such as Dr. Jeanne Chall, say it repeatedly, and the last two projects emanating from the U.S. Department of Education say it clearly and emphatically. It is not a new issue. Yet four out of five schools in the U.S. are doing much the opposite, and teacher training institutions are teaching the opposite, teaching the use of whole-word memorization, the "Dick & Jane see Spot run!" look-and-guess, psycholinguistic, or whatever other names it can go by. But it's opposite to the weight of available research, and it doesn't even have a coherent theory to justify it, as has also been pointed out by Dr. Chall. Should business people treat education people as "part of the problem?"

Why do educators seem to bury the reading and literacy problem? For one kind of reason, look into the record of an earlier session (August 1, 1985) of these hearings for the testimony of the leader of the most influential professional body in the field of reading, the International Reading Association (IRA). The gentleman is also a professor of reading at a teacher training institution. But what he did not say is that he is also a paid consultant to one of the textbook publishing houses that supplies millions of basal reading books. The IRA was founded in 1956, the year after Rudolf Flesch's blockbuster, "Why Johnny Can't Read," by a coalition of people deeply involved in the writing and publishing of whole-word reading materials. The association has, over the years, augmented its influence to where it is virtually the only game in town in reading practices and pedagogy. In its publications and in its local and national conventions it controls what and who gets published, and who gets to make presentations to teachers. The late Nina Traub, who won a federal Title IV-C replication grant for her successful phonic-based program called "Recipe for Reading," was put on one IRA convention program in the late '70's, in a small room. Her workshop was so heavily registered that they had to move her into the main auditorium. But she was never invited to another IRA function. The large-scale reading tests run in the mid 1960's, called the 27 First-Grade Studies, showed overwhelmingly superior results for phonic-based reading systems. These were derided and downplayed in IRA publications, referred to as "infamous," and given as a reason for "discontinuing the use of such tests for evaluating reading methodologies." Indeed, despite all the controversy over phonics vs whole-word methods, no large-scale testing has been done in the last 20 years.

No one denies that the aim of reading is comprehension, or understanding of meaning. Even though research shows that phonics-trained students comprehend better, whole-word advocates claim otherwise and deride phonics as "mere word-calling," and claim that "comprehension skills" include vocabulary, general knowledge, and language experience. What they neglect to mention is the innate contribution of early phonic practice to the acquisition of all of those comprehension elements. From an engineering point of view, the linguistic and analytical experiences acquired by the phonics-trained student form the basis of the ability to handle information necessary for all other learning. The diagram in Figure 2 is an attempt to depict what research has already shown to be true.

The success of our work force, indeed our success as a Nation, rests on our ability to solve problems. Problem solving requires precise thinking, usually precise communication with others. Precise thinking and communication require precision of language, a quality I find wanting in much of the documentation I see in the marketplace. It affects even the documents of this committee: there are two anomalies in your "Rules for Testimony!" If we look at the nation that is tops on the precollege education comparisons we find it is also the country that is beating the pants off us in world trade. That country is Japan, whose industrial practices call for building in quality the first time, and they do it with a workforce whose rising generation is topping all others in math, science, and problem-solving measures.

We're talking about preventing reading failure, using the old ounce of prevention principle. Let's engineer the system, train the regular first and second grade teachers to do it right the first time. The track record of remedial reading is its own condemnation. School systems that have switched to phonic-intensive methods not only are seeing higher scores, but reduced costs of materials. We can not call ourselves a scientific or technological nation while we permit 80% of our schools to continue to use reading methods which have repeatedly proven inferior. Our ability to govern ourselves will ultimately founder if we cannot turn our schools to using reading systems built on research-proven foundations. The turnaround will not happen unless those of us who understand the situation speak out.

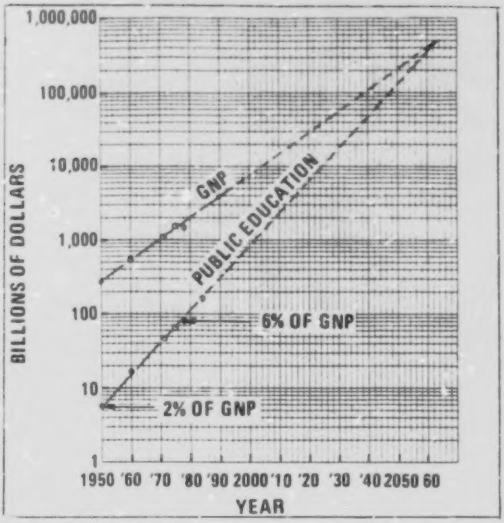
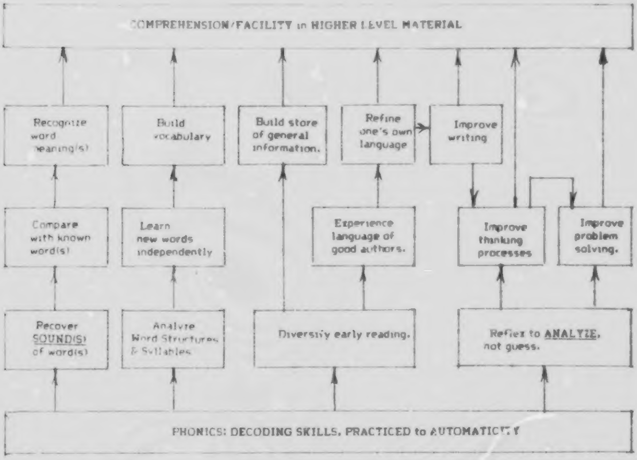


FIGURE 1


COMPREHENSION/FACILITY in HIGHER LEVEL MATERIAL
Recognize word meaning(s)
Build vocabulary
Build store of general information.
Refine one's own language
Improve writing
Compare with known word(s)
Learn new words independently
Experience language of good authors.
Improve thinking processes
Improve problem solving.
Recover SOUND(S) of word(s)
Analyze Word Structures & Syllables
Diversify early reading.
Reflex to ANALYZE, not guess.
PHONICS: DECODING SKILLS, PRACTICED to AUTOMATICITY

THE FOUNDATIONS of LITERACY

Figure 2

There is a great need to organize the good information so as to counter the mountain of misinformation and ignorance created by the events of the past half century. The last two relevant publications sponsored by the Department of Education have laid down the principle (phonics first and intensively) to be followed, but not the details. Therefore, I urge the establishment of a study, with legislative oversight, to identify reading programs which use phonics effectively so as to produce the best results in reading achievement for the greatest proportion of our children. The study should be scientifically run, using existing research wherever possible, and should result in a report describing the characteristics of such programs in a way that parents and educators can use the information to select reading materials for the children in their charge.

Because the great increases in per-pupil expenditures for education have been accompanied by declines in quality, it is clear that school administration and management need to tighten up accountability and quality control procedures. Therefore, I urge that studies be directed, with legislative oversight, toward identifying school management systems and practices which produce effective basic skill learning progressions, with scientifically verifiable results, and clear lines of responsibility and accountability for said results.

It was good to have Dr. Strickland in today's hearing because her testimony is representative of the "reading establishment's" use of attractive words like "meaning" and "comprehension cueing" to muddy the waters between the processes of "learning to read," and "reading to learn." The initial emphasis on "meaning," as opposed to "sounding," ignores the basic fact that the beginning reader is not interested so much in meaning as in the successful act of reading, and that practice sentences like, "Matt sat on a fat cat," serve a vital purpose in the mechanics of the "learning to read" process. The "cueing strategies" and psycholinguistic guessing are devoid of research validation, and are poor substitutes for automatic, accurate decoding. (Ref: Jeanne Chall, Stages of Reading Development) The way the comprehension issue is being used is a diversion from the the real problem. Comprehension is "reading to learn," and requires the subskills depicted in the diagram of Figure 2. The "comprehension skills" band-aided into remedial reading labs include items that belong in the turf of other teachers, e.g., English, science, social studies. An analogy is that of the average adult reader attempting to read a passage about brain surgery: He might read every word, but comprehend little. But, for help he would turn not to a reading teacher, but rather to someone schooled in the vocabulary and subject matter! The reading establishment's demagoguery, its articulate asininity, qualify as "acts of war" as described in the "Nation at Risk" report.

Mr. Chairman, you asked how engineering relates to the issue of literacy. I can assure you that literacy skills are vital in the engineering profession in the management of information: Responding to the needs of the customer as expressed in his RFP, writing a clear and persuasive proposal or article, clarifying/documenting requirements and specifications with subcontractors.

Thank you for including this supplemental testimony.

Chairman Hawkins. The next witness is Mr. Charles J. Micciche, superintendent of schools, Groveton, NH.

Mr. Micciche, I apologize for having mispronounced your name at the very beginning. I should have known better. I guess I didn't go through phonics when I was in school.

Mr. Micciche. It is one of the few sight words you will ever encounter, sir.

Chairman Hawkins. Thank you.

Mr. Micciche. Mr. Chairman, Senator Zorinsky, and members of the committee, the problem of illiteracy among our citizens is so obvious, so prevalent, and so well-documented that it doesn't warrant dragging before you a raft of statistics to prove its existence and dimension.

We know there is a problem when our colleges, corporations, and Armed Forces must institute remedial programs for their new employees and recruits. You know there is a problem when you pass over applicants for positions on your staff as aides and secretaries in your own offices.

I know there is a problem, and a serious one, when one out of every five letters of application I receive from college graduates for teaching jobs in my school districts goes into the round file due to misspellings, poor punctuation, lack of syntax, organization, grammar, or any solid evidence of acceptable communications skills.

The vital questions center not on how much illiteracy there is, but on how we eradicate it, prevent it, and assure future generations that they will not be plagued by this insidious weakness pervading our culture.

The most difficult task lies in eradication, and there is no simple solution outside of a committed exercise of will and intellect from every adult citizen who desires to overcome his or her deficiencies with literacy and command of language.

I am a practical school administrator and have full knowledge of my strengths and limitations to deal with illiteracy. I will confine my remarks to the problem of prevention.

I ask your indulgence for a moment to bear with some statistics that illustrate the reading effectiveness of children in my three rural school districts in northern New Hampshire, statistics which define how my schools establish the fundamental language arts skills that lay a rock-solid foundation for reading, the first and only defense against illiteracy.

On the 1985 California Achievement Test, reading subscores, I have a few scores here from my fourth graders, who have been into our reading program for 4 years. And the subscores are on the vocabulary, comprehension, expression, and mechanics subtests.

I have divided these into two sections, the top achievers and the lowest achievers.

The top achievers in my 4th grade, who should average around the 75th percentile on these subscore tests. score on those respective subtests at the 88.7-, 88.3-, 83.9- and 82.4-percentile levels.

Fine. Top achievers should score well. What about the low achievers, what about those kids that always wind up falling between the cracks, the ones that we have remedial programs for in many schools, the ones that usually get shunted off to title I programs or chapter 1 programs, or get moved into special education programs for want of something to do for these youngsters, those kids who score normally at the 25th percentile and lower.

My youngsters on these same subtests score at the 48.8 percentile on vocabulary, 49.2 percentile on comprehension, 38 percentile on expression, 34.2 percentile on mechanics.

For what an average is worth, if we combine all of these figures and compare the students in my school districts on these reading subtests with the national average, which come out to the 50th percentile, my youngsters come out to 68.2 percentile, one full standard deviation beyond the mean.

Now, as significantly above the national scores as these figures are, it is even more significant to know something about the demographics of my school districts to appreciate their value vis-a-vis the regional culture.

All of my districts lie in Coos County, NH, which was determined in the 1980 census study to be one of the 20 poorest counties in the Nation. By every measure, per capita income, equalized evaluation of property, unemployment, local suicide rate, divorce rate, Coos County is consistently on the bottom within New Hampshire's counties every year.

Yet our local reading scores have been consistently above State and national figures since 1980.

I think this emphasizes that children, regardless of their social and economic environment, can learn well when taught well, and will not learn well, no matter how much money you throw at their schools, when they are not taught well.

Let me outline for you briefly what changes in our reading program came about to cause these dramatic increases in our scores, to lay this solid foundation for literacy among our children.

When I became the assistant superintendent for my present districts, I was given the task to do something about the poor reading scores in the schools. A secondary science background did not equip me with the skills in elementary reading curriculum, but my training in scientific research gave me the basis for evaluating our existing program, identifying its weaknesses; and understanding what I needed to do to make proper changes.

I spent 2 years examining reading programs, reviewing literature, and generally educating myself to address the problem.

In all fairness and objectivity, I found that the flaw in our program, as in most published, packaged, basal reading systems, lay in the instructional mode called whole-word or look-say pedagogy, a pedagogy absolutely bankrupt of logic, merit, effectiveness, and common sense, and replete with the germ of most reading difficulties found among our illiterates in our society today, in and out of school.

The logic of language, if it is to transcend space and time, if it is to pass from one generation to another, if it is to transmit across the boundaries of a mother and her child in the cradle, across the backyard fence, across oceans and cultures, that logic depends entirely upon the process of encoding words in written form.

No one is illiterate in a society that has only an oral tradition of language. But once a civilization invents its written code, no one is immune from illiteracy who does not or cannot learn that code.

Our encoding system is simplicity itself, the alphabet. Twenty-six symbols, capable of arrangements to create the 44 sounds of English, comprise the entire code to unlock the lexicon of several hundred thousand words in the language.

Yet I found in my studies that our old reading system did not teach the code, the sounds of language, the tools needed to read and write all words.

Surprisingly, the reading system trained children to look and say the whole words they encountered, to memorize whole words one at a time, ignoring the fact that a coding system exists at all. This system works well for pictographic languages like oriental ideographs or ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, but not for a modern alphabetic language like English.

Here is why. A good standard dictionary will have about 150,000 entries. The massive Webster's that you find in most libraries contains over 400,000 entries.

Children entering school usually have a command of language that would surprise you. You, yourselves probably had a speaking vocabulary of 3,000 words when you entered school, and an understanding, recognition, or listening vocabulary of 8,000 to 10,000 more.

In order to learn to read these words you had already orally mastered, you would have had to memorize by shape, by association with pictures, stories, and extensive drill and recall, the full 11,000 to 13,000 whole words.

Unless you were taught to read phonetically, unless you were taught the code system by which words were transcribed into writing, you would have been condemned to this insurmountable task.

Treating words as wholes, as hieroglyphic units, absolutely defies the logic of our phonetic coding system.

I submit that any reading program using whole word, look-say, phonetic analysis, the eclectic approach, miscue or word guessing reading techniques is the seed of illiteracy in our society today. And further, I submit that illiteracy is the greatest rot in the fabric of our culture.

Moreover, since 85 percent of the Nation's public elementary schools use look-say systems and have been doing so for over 50 years, a fraud of immense proportions has been visited upon the last four or five generations of children in our country.

There is a complex web of circumstances that has brought us to this sad state, and to fully understand why one needs to appreciate the psychological and economic evolution of public education from the early 1900's on, examining the nations of John Dewey and Colonel Parker, the social changes in America after the First World War, the rise of consumerism and the effectiveness of advertising in the marketplace, and most of all, the unhealthy, self-serving, vested, monopolistic interests of that troika of misplaced power, the entrenched professor/publisher/author control of how and what our teachers are given in teacher colleges.

The most important cost of the two costs that result from illiteracy is psychological, and rises both from the fact of a frustrated and illiterate segment of our citizenry and the concommitant lack of confidence in American public education.

The other cost is in the need for remediation, a need that admits the job of teaching reading was done improperly in the first place.

It is significant to note that the number of referrals in my elementary schools has declined for remedial reading and learning disability placements in resource room programs since we established phonics.

This is verified by the additional written testimony submitted from my staff and my colleagues, including a principal, my special education coordinator, a language specialist, our school psychologist, and several of my veteran elementary classroom teachers. I urge you to refer to their sincere and enthusiastic support of our program.

With the very narrow limits of verifiable biological disabilities, comprising less than 1 percent of the population, most children entering school are not dyslexic, they are not brain damaged, and they are not learning disabled. They are, however, disabled and damaged by logically and pedagogically unsound approaches to teaching reading. Those approaches are not inexpensive.

A typical basal program purveys its misbegotten notions through hardcover books, workbooks, pamphlets, posters, charts, games, ditto masters, and an array of teacher management devices which have a built in obsolescence. They must be purchased for each child, each year, at an average cost of $18 to $20 per child.

When my three districts were using a similar package 7 years ago, our average cost was $16 per pupil per year, for a program that didn't even work.

Since we switched to phonics, our annual costs have stabilized at $2.25 per pupil per year, and include hardcover literature books, teacher training, and paper and pencils for the children.

Isn't it ironic that there was an inverse relationship between high cost and low productivity, between low cost and high output? Isn't it a tragedy that the majority of school systems still act as if throwing a lot of money at a problem will make it go away, when a good resource, minimally and properly funded, will solve the deep problems in literacy that we face.

The limited fiscal resources in New Hampshire and our State as lowest in the Nation in State support of education are legendary. Yet the prudent use of our funds has given us top in the Nation ranking in the scholastic achievement test scores several years in a row, and locally my districts rank in the top of the State for reading ability. Our success is also measured by the fewer children being referred to chapter 1 and special education placements.

The solution, in my view, is for us to rid ourselves of reading programs that don't work if we are to uproot the weed of illiteracy.

Look-say and whole-word methods, with their self-serving dependency, their built-in obsolescence of materials, their addition to mediocrity, all serve to fertilize the seeds of illiteracy.

Look-say reading structured on a false and baseless philosophy, frustrated and often poorly trained teachers, a publishing industry more concerned with the bottom line for its stockholders than the upper limits of learning for children, a citizenry brought up on the inanities of Dick and Jane, and children, children anesthetized by controlled vocabularies, children so conditioned to meaningless readers in school that they often turn to Saturday morning cartoons for solace—is it any wonder we have a nation of poor readers and nonreaders today?

Is it any wonder that lawsuits, so far unsuccessful, periodically crop up against schools for educational malpractice? Is it any wonder that this Nation has a right to be deeply troubled by the illiteracy of so many of its public schools' consumers.

I am gratified at this committee's concern and willingness to listen to recommendations, because you have it within your power to begin this country's difficult but vital process to recover from its plague of illiteracy.

An objective, scientific comparison of reading systems is essential. Too many vested interests oppose phonics.

An honest assessment will allow phonics to stand on its own merit against expensive programs whose effectiveness lack credibility.

If there were a magical instant change in the public schools tomorrow to a reading system that really works and costs 85 percent less than those schools are now using, severe market dislocations would probably result to the detriment of some publishers and their employees and stockholders, and to the lasting benefit of taxpayers and their children.

No one is expecting magic, nor am I asking from this committee for a pontifical mandate for instant change. That is not what a free enterprise system is all about.

What I am urging is that an unbiased study be made and published, that the facts be allowed to speak for themselves, and that parents, teachers, and school boards be allowed to choose as informed consumers in their selection of reading programs.

I have great faith and trust in the American citizen's sense of fairness, judgment, and practicality.

Illiteracy is a deeply embedded problem, in that for the last four or five generations look-say reading has been the predominant system, it is what most people know and how most teachers—and teachers of teachers—learn to instruct in reading.

The cycle won't easily be broken, but your committee's leadership in supporting a fair assessment of the causes of illiteracy can have a profound effect in refocusing our educational priority on making this truly a nation of readers.

Thank you.

Chairman **Hawkins**. Thank you.

[Attachments to the statement of Charles Micciche follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARC MICCICHE, UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

HEMISPHERIC DIFFERENTIATION AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: THE TRANSFORMATION OF SPOKEN LANGUAGE TO THE WRITTEN CODE

Simple analogies fail to justify the limitless complexity of the human brain and its interactive, discreet, yet ultimately interdependent two halves, the right and left hemispheres. The normal brain, whose norms where first inferred by the pioneering work of Wernicke and Broca, paradoxically by studying abnormalities in speech and language disorders (aphasias) and later by Deterine's brilliant forensic analyses, separates the two critical language functions of surface recognition and deep meaning in its halves. The left brain, to use an analogy that allows a minimal level of interpretation, is the computer, the clerk, the humorless functionary which spends its time before a limitless array of pigeonholes storing, cataloging, and retrieving the elemental units of language, words. The right brain is the artist and poet, the emotional, directionless purveyor of images, concepts, flashes of insight, the master of puns and metaphor.

Split-brain studies illustrate the divided nature of the halves, their limits and potential, and through study of certain unfortunate disease conditions, reveal the mechanism and importance of linkage. This fibrous body of nerve tissue, the corpus callosum, articulates right and left brains, and allows the balance of communication essential to normal language development. Restak describes the development of this tissue as it matures to its final function: the formation begins in the early months of life and may not be completed until age eight or nine. During this time, pruning of unnecessary neurons takes place along with myelinization of the fiber tracts. Notebohm discusses this 'neural plasticity' in his recent (1984) study of neurogenesis in canaries.

Early in life, neural connections are almost random. As a child experiences his environment, pathways develop to facilitate more efficient transmission signals. Notebohm's discussion is especially pertinent concerning a child's language environment and supports the psychologist's theory of association which plays a major role in memory and metaphor.

How does this affect the learning of a complex task that depends on a combination of will, intellect and mechanistic interpretation? First, spoken and aural language acquisition must be briefly explored. To newborns, language must be an incomprehensible rush of noise, less monotonous than the sound of a vacuum cleaner or washing machine, yet as in distinguishable as the sounds of birds or music. By age six months, the infant can differentiate quite a few spoken sounds, but probably makes distinctions among them mostly through tone, voice quality, and concommitant physical stimuli. By seven or eight months, the infant begins voicing a characteristic babble, the baby-talk often perceived as so cute and endearing to adults. This babble-stage is absolutely critical to language formation, however. The baby at this time is making every sound in every human language, from the full range of open vowels, to the nasal "gn" of Romance languages, the gutteral stops of German, and the click sounds of African languages. He does not, at this point, vocalize with any specific communicative intent. That is, he attaches no meaning to his utterances. By trial and error, by association, by repetition and recognition of one language's sounds only (the first, or cradle language), the sounds which elicit appropriate responses from the environment will be reinforced, while phones not essential to the native language will disappear, leaving the child a complete pattern (phonology, syntax and semantics) for his neuromuscular development to follow.

At this point, left and right brains are working independently, yet beginning to settle into their assigned roles as connections in the corpus callosum mature. The cataloging left stores and recalls the phonic essence of words, the imaging right ascribes meaning. It is about age three when the child recognizes that adults or older children have a way of freezing and thawing sounds from strange marks on paper. And within two years, the child knows that the process of reading and writing, of performing the same magic with words, is soon to be within his grasp. This is an extremely vital nexus in the child's life, because he will be able to learn either to recognize words or decipher them, depending upon which half of his brain is engaged in learning to read. Remember: the corpus callosum is not yet fully formed, and either hemisphere is accessible with relatively equal facility. An approach to the right brain with holistic concepts, with picture associations, colors, shapes, with whole words units, if used throughout the complete developmental phases of the corpus callosum will set a life-long learning pattern. The child will be brain-conditioned to learn all the printed words of his language one by one, as wholes.

Should the child be introduced to reading by the decoding and encoding mechanism of the alphabet and its combinations of letters which represent the forty-odd sounds of English, he is then being brain-conditioned to attack words through the logic and organization of syllabic and spelling structure. English uses seventy separate letter and letter combination units to represent all of its sounds. This requires that a child (learning to read) memorize these seventy facts and then learn about thirty rules for their use in words.

Given the normal intellect, curiosity and enthusiasm of six-year-olds, they can memorize these facts within a few weeks of competent, concentrated study. Once the facts become fixed, similar to the fixation of sound production in the infantile babble phase, the essential skills of reading words is embedded, and the child has his keys to the entire lexicon before him, his magic wand to freeze and thaw printed words on his own. Over eighty percent of the hundreds of thousands of English words conform to phonetic regularity. The phonetically trained child can access, decode and encode most of them, even though his vocabulary throughout life may never demand more than twenty or thirty thousand words at the most.

However, the child taught holistically about words and never given the key to their coding, the child taught look-say or whole-word reading, is condemned to a future of using mental gymnastics, mnemonic devices, and gestaltic miracles to learn to read and write words one by one. Just as anthropologists mark the transition of primates to hominids by the use of stone tools, so must linguists mark the transition from primitive to civilized societies by the use of language tools. The evolution of scratched, drawn or carved symbols in hieroglyphic, cunneiform and pictographic 'writing' rapidly reduced to the common elements of phonetic alphabets in western civilization, and established the basis for our contemporary culture. To teach the written transmission of language by any means other than its logical phonic code ignores the emerging scientific mass of technical knowledge of brain studies. Look-say methods are the latter-day equivalents of phlogiston, geocentrism, and all the other misguided notions of man's learning.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOAN KIPP

I have been a classroom teacher for 18 years, and for the last 13 years, I have taught first grade.

Most of the reading programs that I used are basal reading series. The sight word approach is used along with phonics. As a first grade teacher I have felt phonics is a valuable tool for a beginning reader to have. At the same time, I am aware that children with poor memories have trouble learning sight words. There are some children who cannot learn phonics because of auditory problems. They need a more visual approach to reading. Most children I have taught though, have learned to read using the basal reader approach.

It is important to do a thorough job of teaching a child to read in the early grades. Children need to know basic skills in order to progress to more difficult skills.

A child who can read has better self-esteem. A good self-ego helps the child achieve in other areas. Most areas of learning in school involve reading. The illiterate child becomes frustrated and disinterested in school. Some behavior problems in children may be attributed to their poor reading skills.

As they grow older, children become more self-conscious of being illiterate. It is difficult for them to learn the skills they need. Their attitude toward being able to read or improve their skills is poor.

In our world quantities of information come to us through nonreadable media, such as television. But, we need to be able to read in order to get a job in today's world. Reading is the important tool to prepare oneself for a career, from getting a college degree, or to being retrained to fit in with the computerized technology of our society.

Six years ago I was trained in the Spalding Method. I had thought phonics was one good tool for reading previous to this experience. Now, I feel this method is the effective tool and I would not want to give it up to go back and use the reading manual approach to phonics.

Spalding believes that English has seventy common phonograms or sounds (26 single letters and 54 combinations of 2, 3 and 4 letters) to say the forty-four sounds used in speaking. First graders learn fifty-four phonograms when they start school. They say and write the sounds at the same time. After this they begin Spelling, learning 150 of the most frequently used words. Spelling rules are taught along with the spelling words. The rules determine which phonogram to use. The children sound out the words as they write them instead of using the letter names. Some words have special markings which help determine the phonogram's sound. At this point, children are ready to write their own sentences and questions. Later, in first grade, they will learn the remaining sixteen phonograms. The spelling lists continue on.

In the last five years I have used Economy books as supplemental reading material. This helped the child understand how to apply what he learned in Spalding.

Economy uses many of the same two and three letter sounds, such as "ng", "ck", "ay" and "igh". Word lists are similar. Some of the words Economy presents as sight words, the children decode. Presently, we are using the 1986 Economy Reading Series. We are pleased with the progress the children are making with it.

One of the greatest strengths of Spalding that I have observed these past six years is that listening, speaking, spelling and reading are all integrated together in this system. The Spalding teaching method - hearing, writing, seeing and reading, allows the child other avenues if his aural or visual recall of letters is weak. This program is well-structured and it works for most children. It helps the remedial reader and the learning disabled child as well.

One of the reasons given for advocating the whole word approach to reading is that we speak a whole word at a time. Reading is more meaningful when the child can say the whole word rather than parts of it. Some teachers believe it is easier to learn a number of sight words than to learn a set of rules for sounding out words.

The weakness I see in this whole word approach is that children do not have the phonetic skills to pronounce words they do not recognize as sight words. So, they guess at them. Phonetic skills are needed if children are to become independent readers. This is why I believe in teaching Spalding. When children learn to read, it unlocks a new world for them. They become excited as they recognize words they know. When children read a book, which is not a school reading book, they are so proud of their accomplishments.

Reading for enjoyment helps to reinforce this valuable approach to reading. This phonic method lays a solid foundation for reading in the later grades.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF VICKY BAILEY

As a classroom teacher for fourteen years, a mother and a reader, I feel it is very important to address the question of literacy in this country. There seem to be three factors which help to make a reader - parental example in the home, good reading instruction developed from an integrated language arts program in the school and desire by the individual to read. Reading makes up the majority of all learning. Therefore, it is important that a child read with ease and enjoy doing it.

A child's success in reading is affected by his parents and what he learns at home as well as at school. Parents set examples, so parents need to be seen reading and to read to their child. They, also, need to encourage their child to read himself. I don't believe parents realize their importance in their child's reading development. Television makes it easier to watch the news than to read it in newspapers. A child is allowed to stay up an extra half hour to watch TV rather than encouraged to go to bed a half hour earlier to read. It is easier to have television entertain a child than to entertain that child by reading to him.

As reading is a complex thinking process requiring the reader to recognize written words and to understand their meaning, it is necessary for him to have the skills to do this. These skills should be taught before a child starts to read so he can enjoy what he is reading. Reading should not be practice for the skills he learns as he goes along. The teaching of these skills should combine all the language arts (i.e., spelling, writing, speech and reading) and utilize more than one of the senses in the approach. The Spalding Method developed by Romaldo and Walter Spalding does this.

With this method the student is first taught seventy phonograms which are sounds for letters and letter combinations. Then in spelling lessons he is taught words in their order of frequency of use in language. The important spelling rules are taught by example as they occur in the writing of the spelling words. Techniques for good and easy handwriting as well as precise pronunciation are taught from the very beginning. The meaning of the words is taught by using these words in original, well written sentences. With the knowledge of the phonograms, these spelling words and the rules of spelling, the child is ready to begin reading.

The senses are important to the learning process. Everyone seems to find a sensory approach that he learns with best. If a multi-sensory approach is used each student will be able to learn through his best sense. The Spalding Method is a multisensory approach. The student learns through the sense of touch, hearing and seeing.

The Spalding Method requires the student to use his mind, not just his memory. This kind of mental discipline is valuable to all learning. Other positive aspects of this program are its use with the bi-lingual, the mentally handicapped and any age level. Also, it can be a whole language arts program or the foundation with which to use other texts as supplements.

With every teacher in a school system using this method as the basis for the language arts program, it will insure fluent transitions from class to class, and a continuous reinforcing and maintaining of the skills. Many times in school systems there are different programs being used for each of the language arts' components in the individual classroom as well as throughout the school. As a result a child might be reading using the look-say approach with a contrived vocabulary while learning to write the letter 'M' for penmanship, doing workbook pages that are teaching the 'ch' sound, and learning spelling words with short vowel words. As the child passes to the next grade, the texts might be different which means the approaches could be different. Also, this would disrupt the order in which the skills are taught.

There are many approaches to reading, and there is the on-going argument of phonics versus look-say. It is my experience that children learn to read better and easier with specific, concrete skills - those skills that a phonics program provides. However, many of these programs do not teach these skills before the student tries to read but as he goes along. The Spalding Program believes the teaching of phonics belongs in the teaching of spelling and that reading is to learn what is being said and not to learn phonics. This approach works. It would be difficult to think of teaching without using Spalding. The Spalding Program is consistent and once the student has the skills through the teaching of spelling, he has the ability and the confidence to attack any reading material he wishes. He is not limited to contrived vocabulary found in some basal readers. Schools can retain the reading books they have to use as books for reading after the skills to read with have been taught according to the Spalding Method.

If the student has the skills to read with, if he reads to find out what is being said, if he is being read to by adults, if he sees adults reading because they want to, the desire to read will be there. That sounds like a lot of ifs, but when one stops to think about them, they are not hard to accomplish.

Not wanting to sound like an ad for the Spalding Method, I must point our that it presents a logical way to approach learning to read. The skills are taught independent of any specific reading program with a multi-sensory approach that integrates all the language arts and gives the reader confidence in his ability to read. What more can we ask of a program!

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SYLVIA CARRIGAN

I have taught children to read with a variety of programs over twenty years. I have had much greater success with phonics approaches than any look-say, whole word programs. The Spalding program that I am using now is by far the most successful. The children learn faster and with more eagerness.

Opponents who thought the program to be boring were easily won over after trying it. Teachers at this school are concerned about having to use another program should they change schools. The teachers in the primary grades where reading is the major part of the day are particularly concerned. The success rate is so outstanding that we have achieved good parent participation. They too are excited by the reading abilities.

The Spalding phonics program uses the multisensory approach of seeing, saying, writing, and reading. This approach first teaches letters, letter combinations, and on to spelling, and reading of books. The spelling is the beginning of the decoding using simple, easy to remember rules. Young children have very good success with this program.

Before we had a school wide phonics program only the children receiving remedial reading were being taught phonics. With phonics the number needing remedial help is greatly reduced.

I believe if we are truly interested in eliminating illiteracy the phonics approach should be the only way of teaching. It enables children to read very quickly. It gives them skills for decoding that become so automatic that they are reading fluently and enjoying it very early in their school life. They are able to read a variety of material. With other methods they are taught key words for a story filled with Dalch words and cannot transfer to other works. With their phonics they can read individually more difficult material.

Children are much less frustrated with the phonics approach to reading. Because they are all being taught this method together previous experiences or lack of them have little effect on their learning. They have concrete skills to help them where with other programs they have only their memories to rely on. The children read better, score higher on achievement tests, and have a better attitude toward school work. This makes phonics the most important program a school can have.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CAROL CURTIS

Imagine climbing a ladder with the bottom three rungs missing. Those with good athletic abilities may be able to spring gracefully up, but the majority will flounder on the ground trying, but never making is easily.

The same holds true of reading programs which do not emphasize phonics in the early grades. As an elementary and a special education teacher, I have been aware of the number of students leaping to grab the rung of reading but unable to reach it.

Luckily, now as Director of Special Services for SAU#58, I can be certain that our 'literacy ladder' has all the rungs - and strong ones at that. This is due to the Spalding Program. With this program in place from kindergarten through sixth grade, all students are given the basic support of a phonetic structure.

With the realization that readings comes (1) by building upon the pre-learned auditory skills (2) by using the natural need for visual reinforcement and (3) the desire of children to reach closure, one can see that the Spalding Method (with its logical and sequential phonics) is one of a few outstanding methods for assisting the young reader.

By using a strong phonics approach, the Special Services team sees fewer students referred for lack of decoding skills and basic spelling problems. Students are reading at or above grade level in all classrooms. There is a positive feeling about reading, as demonstrated by the high usage of our libraries.

I would like to add that when a student is unable to learn to read well through a phonetic approach, the Special Services team is immediately pointed in the direction of severe auditory problems. This has served to make the screening process, IEP writing, and choice of instructional methods much more accurate.

In SAU#58 we don't seem to be asking "Why can't Johnny read?". We may have to deal with the over stimulation of television viewing; or the lack of abstract thinking skills; or even the lack of physical flexibility and strength but seem to have a good handle on the early reading groundwork and are now able to begin that long climb up or "literacy ladder".

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BRENT HOLT

This statement is written to endorse the Spalding Method of teaching children to read and write. As a school psychologist whose area of concern lies with special students (mentally retarded, learning disabled, gifted, and emotionally disturbed), I am particularly concerned about effective and individualized approaches to teaching these students.

I see it as being critical to preserve the phonetic approach upon which the English language is based. Languages around the world which rely on memorized symbols rather than phonetic concepts are limited in function and quickly lose their utility in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world. From phonetic roots has come the richness of the English language in terms of breadth of vocabulary and conciseness of expression. Proper reading and writing instruction necessitates, therefore, that phonetic approach.

Recent learning theorists have asserted that people learn through two distinct processing channels: sequential and simultaneous. Sequential processing is comprised of logical, systematic approaches to knowledge acquisition while simultaneous processing, akin to Gestalt theory, postures that learning occurs as an individual makes sense and differentiates knowledge from a complex surrounding environment. Very often, emotionally disturbed students have particular difficulty discriminating information in an environment which contains multiple cues. Distracted by their emotional issues, simultaneous processing weakens or fails. Learning without structure and rule becomes difficult if not impossible. The sequential approach of the Spalding Method allows them a logical and structured alternative not allowed by "word recognition" approaches.

The Spalding Method as a phonetic approach has certain essential advantages over other phonetic programs. It teaches the elements of the English language through a varied number of congnitive processing channels: visual, auditory, aural, and kinesthetic. In other words, the student learns to read and write by seeing, hearing, saying, and writing the seventy phonograms. This presents many advantages to the students with whom I work, particularly the "specifically learning disabled".

Learning disabled students are students who have specific cognitive processing disabilities which interfere with their ability to see and accurately copy written material. If left solely to visual learning stimuli, such as copying from a chalkboard or spelling workbook, spelling will be delayed and impaired. The Spalding Method, with its multi-factored cognitive approaches, would compensate for that visual weakness by allowing that student to also learn the same material through auditory avenues. Learning disabled students, usually showing significant verbal weaknesses (auditory and visual imaging) in comparison to their performance (physically manipulative) aptitudes, now are able to experience early school success. They not only are using the verbal channels of learning such as seeing and hearing but also are able to utilize performance skills such as writing.

Finally, individualized instruction of children who might be at the extreme ranges of intellectual functioning is allowed by the Spalding Method. Slower and retarded students have shown they are capable of learning the phonograms, albeit at a slower rate. Traditional approaches have consistently failed with this population, and it is more important that these children learn phonograms at a slower rate than not to read at all. The Spalding Method also presents distinct advantages for those gifted or high intelligence students. Because the phonograms are applicable to complex as well as beginning vocabulary words, "above-grade-level" decoding allows these students the opportunity to enjoy reading of more intellectually stimulating material.

In conclusion, I have found the Spalding Method to be a recommendable and highly effective approach to the acquisition of English reading and writing skills for the diverse population of students I serve. The program incorporates a sound philosophical base which is the phonetic teaching of the English language. Critically, for me, it offers a varied cognitive processing approach to the presentation and acquisition of these skills, making it possible for special learners to learn to read and write at a higher level.

Chairman HAWKINS. The next witness is Mrs. Sally Queal, Blytheville, AR.

Mrs. Queal, we welcome you.

Mrs. QUEAL. Thank you.

I am a resource room teacher, and I would like to tell you today of the importance of using phonics-based reading systems in our classrooms, and of the odyssey I have traveled to arrive at this opinion.

I have a liberal arts degree in English and history, a B.A. in education, and an M.S. in special education. I had top grades, went to good schools, and expected to begin my first teaching assignment very well prepared indeed.

I began as a long-term substitute in a class for children who were predicted to be school failures. They had all already flunked kindergarten.

Instead of doing regular first grade work, those children were to be assigned extra activities so they could acquire experience and develop knowledge and skills needed for doing first grade work, loads of films, field trips, telling stories, being read to, et cetera.

It seemed to me that instead of doing this, they should be working and drilling on first grade objectives and pursuing enrichment activities in the time that remained.

It was clear to me that in following that program of reading readiness, when the children were retested for second grade, obviously still more special classes would be needed.

In my next classroom, I had junior high special education students. From their records, I recall all sorts of handicapping conditions, but their major handicap was that they couldn't read.

I waited eagerly for the reading specialist's assessment results. Older and wiser teachers laughed to themselves, sadly knowing how little the results would help me deal with the problems.

The testing revealed that Johnny could not comprehend passages at grade level, his word attack skills were poor, and he couldn't consistently pronounce vowel dipthongs or medial sounds.

This was Greek to me, and to my fellow junior and senior high school teachers with whom I shared these test interpretations.

The reading specialist didn't have time to teach us how to teach reading. For all practical purposes, we still just knew that Johnny couldn't read.

I read to them from books and newspapers, I shared Weekly Reader with them. I had them work puzzles and play other games that were supposed to improve their perceptual skills and make them more ready for reading.

I found some phonics sheets and some other reading material that another teacher before me had left in the teacher's closet. I used those, but not knowing the sequence in which these skills should be taught, I am afraid much of this was unproductive, hit or miss effort.

I retired from teaching for a number of years in order to stay home with my own young children. When they were both of school age, I returned to teaching, this time at the Department of Defense Dependents School in Lakenheath, England.

I organized the compensatory education program for the high school. Our target students were those who for no identifiable reason were not succeeding in school.

The labelless adolescents all had one thing in common. Surprise. They couldn't read. They manifested various degrees of illiteracy. They were angry, frustrated young people who disliked their special curriculum and wanted to function in regular classes like their peers. Their inability to read, write, and spell make that participation very difficult.

I complained about the problem to a friend who was soliciting volunteers to conduct a lay tutoring program in the elementary school. I became a volunteer in order that I might at last learn how to teach reading.

We used the Metra Reading Program, which was designed originally, as I understand it, for use in Utah with indigent Indian children.

The system required no commonality of white middle-class background, no prereading activities. It is a sequential system of teaching sounds, first consonant, then vowel, then combinations, dipthongs, common word segments, prefixes and suffixes.

The children could read something the very first day, and they were thrilled. I, too, was thrilled. I finally knew a process that could really help the children who came to my classroom.

I could begin to successfully teach reading after completing a 4-hour training course, 4 hours actual elapsed time, not university credit hours. I couldn't believe the simplicity of it, having been taught that all children learn by different methods, far too numerous to mention.

Even with a master's degree in special education, I had never been taught one process to teach the subject on which all else depends, reading.

From England, we were transferred to Blytheville, AR, where I teach primarily learning disabled and educable mentally retarded youngsters.

My first year, I was confronted with three very ill-behaved nonreaders who had been together long enough to have rehearsed game plans for thwarting the teacher.

Doubtlessly, when they were at the optimum age to acquire reading skills, they had been hyperactive and disabled in the sense that there was a discrepancy in their learning modalities that made it difficult, if not impossible for them to learn along with their peers.

Their psychological reports said they were nonreaders, and since they were already 16 to 18, probably always would be.

Taping all their textbooks, memorizing survival word lists, teaching survival skills such as filling out job applications, license forms, and so on, was the recommended curriculum.

They demanded my full-time attention with their antics. I was unable to spend any quality time with any other students.

In desperation, I ordered my own copy of the Metra Teaching Manual. You cannot imagine how exciting it was to see their attitudes toward school change. Their pride in their progress was matched only by my own. Once they could read, however low the level, progress could begin.

One of the young men is here today, Tracy Willyard. He can describe full well the frustration of a nonreader in an environment designed for the literate.

He is bitter because he should be in college now, and instead is in an adult remedial program. His school records indicated that he would never read and any effort to teach him would be futile. He knows this was not true. He is learning to read and could have learned perhaps earlier with a structured phonics system.

You should be asking now how many students are not only being deprived of the right to read, but are mistakenly being labeled as uneducable, dual handicaps, obviously ruinous to one's future life.

I now teach two children from Thailand with the same Metra system. They can now read and comprehend sixth grade material. They are particularly interesting because they have no background in English spelling or sentence structure.

They have learned all the sounds very rapidly. They can read, but they can't spell or write as yet.

I have started teaching them to do this with the Spalding method, which has the student memorize the spelling of 70 phonograms—phonograms are individual letters and fixed combinations of 2, 3 or 4 letters that represent one or more of the speech sounds.

When they can successfully spell those phonograms from dictation, they can spell 93 percent of the words they will use in written expression. They and I can't wait.

Illiteracy is crippling and expensive; $54 million was paid out in welfare benefits to the 24,000 unemployed and illiterate adults in Mississippi County, AR alone. That represents $212 million in lost personal income.

Forty-five percent fail to complete high school. Prison populations swell with illiterate dropouts. They can't get jobs and thus turn to crime.

We must do something to combat illiteracy. For the richest Nation on Earth to have such high illiteracy rates is a costly and tragic national scandal.

I am proud to be a teacher. I try every day to teach well. I care about my students and their futures. Everyone I know in teaching does. That is why I chose this profession.

It is a wonderful feeling to help a person grow, to know you have made a difference in their lives.

The children we see in today's classrooms present us with many problems and challenges, and I know that learning to read won't solve all of them. But it can solve the ones schools are empowered to address. The cycle of frustration and mental imprisonment can be broken by effective reading instruction.

I have related to you this odyssey so that you might understand the resentment I feel at having to reinvent the wheel.

There are several known phonics-based processes for the teaching of reading. I should have been taught one.

When talking with other teachers, I have found the same lack of information about the process for teaching reading. All of us have had methods in teaching of reading and/or special education methods in teaching of reading. We learned all about reading, peripherally speaking.

We learned that some children learn best kinesthetically, some orally, still other visually, a whole kaleidoscope of reading concepts, but no process.

I submit to you that we are entitled to be given processes so that we can teach the most effectively. If you don't know where you are going, it is unlikely you are going to get there.

If a teacher understands the sequential development of reading skills, when a child begins to flounder she knows what went wrong and how to get that child back on track. She is no longer at the mercy of the textbooks, many of which are quite confusing as they attempt to teach the different modalities and combine all approaches.

Many children cannot select the portion of the teaching that is directed to them and thus learn to read.

The fundamental error in thinking seems to be that children must be presented with an opportunity to learn through a conglomeration of approaches and that the learning cannot be systematized and structured in any way.

From my experience, children, especially those with learning problems, learn best when all channels to the mind are tapped simultaneously, as they are with the Spalding method and some others.

The child sees the letters that comprise the sounds, visual modality, says the sounds, both oral and aural, and writes phonograms for the sounds, kinesthetic, very organized, very simple.

One repeatedly hears the argument, yes, yes, but reading is a lot more than just being able to say the words.

I say to that, true, true, but until they can at least read the words accurately and fluently, they have no hope of developing the other necessary skills.

We must begin somewhere. What good does it do to try and teach students to learn to predict outcomes, detect the main idea, recognize inferred meaning or make judgments, if they cannot decode the words?

It is time for the government to study reading systems that get results and generate recommendations for improved reading instruction.

Textbook publishers need to design textbooks implementing these recommendations.

Schools and colleges of education need to design courses for us that emphasize the processes needed for teaching reading effectively.

These are only suggestions from an ordinary teacher, but they reflect the views of many of us. We really must do something.

I am reminded of that compelling public service announcement, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

Chairman HAWKINS. Thank you.

The next witness is Mrs. Ann Mactier, member of the board of education, Omaha, NE.

I understand that you are accompanied by secondary school students. Would you very kindly introduce and have them stand at the beginning of your testimony, so we can at least welcome them?

Mrs. MACTIER. Yes. I have here Matthew Jordan, from Omaha; Dennis McQuillen, from Omaha; and Jason Paladino, from Norfolk, NE.

Chairman HAWKINS. We welcome the students also.

Mrs. MACTIER. Let me introduce Tracy Willyard, from Blytheville, AR, for Mrs. Queal.

Chairman HAWKINS. Thank you. It is nice to have the young man present.

You may proceed.

Mrs. MACTIER. I must say that I do not speak as a member of the board of education of Omaha, NE. I speak for myself.

Chairman HAWKINS. Well, that is good enough.

Mrs. MACTIER. Thank you.

An abundance of illiteracy does exist in our land. And nowhere do the words of the Nation At Risk report apply more tragically than to this fact. "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war." But it was not an unfriendly foreign power that imposed the way we teach reading upon us. We did it to ourselves. And we must correct it ourselves.

There is urgency. Lives are being wasted, and excellence in education is being lost. We must look immediately for sources of the problem, and put in place as quickly as we can the best possible solution.

Fortunately, there is an excellent solution ready at hand, a remarkable method of teaching reading that can enable virtually all children of 6 years and older to read in a year's time anything they can say. Where there is a need, parents can learn right along with their children.

But what are the sources of the problem? One is the basic ideology which has undergirded the main line of our teaching of reading for decades. This ideology must be brought to the light of day, looked at and discarded once and for all.

It says children learn to read best by memorizing whole words by sight. It says children who learn the spellings of the sounds in isolation—phonics—are harmed by that knowledge. This is the ideology we must put behind us.

As far the best solution to the problem, it is very possibly the Spalding method of teaching reading, which understands that children learn to read in different ways and teaches all four of them concurrently, using a clear, simple, multisensory approach that is virtually foolproof.

If the Spalding method were put into nationwide use immediately, the teachers we have could teach virtually every child 6 and over to read anything he could say in a year's time.

At the least, as large a percentage of our six-year olds would be able to read as do 6-year olds in the most literate countries of America, of the United States is not one.

There are Spalding teaching centers already in operation across the country, which have stemmed from the work of Romalda Spalding and Oma Riggs. A growing number of teachers use Spalding today. Some have been using it more than 20 years.

The Spalding method is not hard to learn. People of low intelligence can learn it, and can learn to read by it, if they follow its precepts carefully.

Literate, non-English speaking people can learn our language with Spalding quickly and easily. And for illiterate adults, there is probably no quicker way to learn to read, nor one which is more exciting and more productive.

What would it cost to put the Spalding method into our schools? Much less than we are spending on the teaching of reading now.

The biggest cost would be the training of teachers. A good Spalding course takes about a week and prepares an experienced teacher to teach it at once.

Supervision is needed for the first year, and most teachers like to repeat the course once or twice in the summertime.

Those who do Spalding the best are ready to become teacher trainers in 2 or 3 years.

The costs of teacher training can be recovered fairly quickly, like in maybe 3 years, because of the elimination of workbooks and worksheets, elimination of years of reading instruction, and elimination of the need for remedial reading courses and counseling for disheartened children. Reading is taught right in the first place.

How is it taught? Kindergartners and first graders learn the printing of the letters and the spelling of the sounds. For first graders, this takes 2 months. In the same 2 months they learn to spell words and to write sentences and use personal pronouns correctly. At the end of the 2 months, if not sooner, they begin to read.

By the end of second grade, children have the skills of spelling, grammar, and writing well in hand, and reading is becoming automatic. Second graders read for pleasure and knowledge. They read good literature, both silently alone and out loud in class in one reading group.

The children discuss and write about ideas that come up in the reading. The learning is its own reward and the motivation for self-discipline. Young minds are nourished and school is fascinating.

Some of you are skeptical of what I am saying here. You ask, if the Spalding method works so well and costs so little, why is it not being used across the country. Good question.

A main reason why it is not and also why we are so far down on the international literacy list is that all of our teachers have been told that children should be taught to read whole words and should not be taught a code for the English language.

No one has taught teachers good phonics. No one has taught them how to teach reading well. The mainline reading teaching professors don't know how to teach reading well because they don't know good phonics. They have been decrying them for decades.

Also, school reading administrators have little interest in and too few incentives for putting in a method, no matter how good it is, that requires teacher training from people outside their own educational bailiwick. And there are incentives for not putting in use a reading method that successfully puts virtually all children in regular classrooms and finishes with the teaching of reading in third grade, incentives like protection of turf, saving of jobs, and having to prepare a whole new curriculum for masses of children who read well in the third grade.

Remedial reading teachers could quickly learn Spalding, but raising the whole intellectual level of elementary schools would be more difficult.

There are problems. Kindergarten teachers have been trained to teach many things, but printing and phonics are not among them. They do what they know to do.

They believe that their job is to get children ready to write and read, not to do them.

There is a big push on now to get disadvantaged children into preschool, especially children who are at risk. But there is little point in putting children in preschools that just do the same things preschools have been doing. We are doing that, though.

We have school districts testing entering kindergartners in low-income areas to find those most at risk to put them into preschools and special kindergartens which get them ready to learn. The purpose, of course, is to give extra help, but the outcome may be that these children come to first grade already behind.

Spalding kindergarten teachers do not test entering children. They just teach them, teach all of them, to print the letters and spell the sounds, and to spell some words, as well. All of the children participate in the regular work of the classroom, and none are allowed to fail.

Come the day when children who have not learned how to print the letters and spell the sounds enter first grade alongside children from Spalding kindergartens, the former will be ready to be taught, but the Spalding children will be starting to read. The former will be behind and many of them will never catch up, because that precious year of natural motivation to learn to read and write, age 5, will have passed by.

I am very concerned that money being channeled today into preschools is going to programs that do not teach children to print the letters and spell the sounds.

Please put money instead into programs that do. Because this curriculum quickly moves children ahead, makes them want to succeed, makes school exciting, and makes a country prosper.

To get such a curriculum instituted, though, we have to convince the powerful early education industry that the curriculum is good for children.

These people caution us now to wait until children are ready to learn. They caution us to wait for motor skills, social skills, and verbal skills to develop.

But there is no need to wait. It is easier to teach social, motor, and verbal skills along with teaching printing and spelling than by themselves, because printing letters and spelling are skills 4 year olds want to learn. And once they learn them, they will read. Spalding is individualized by children themselves.

Spalding cuts down on nonteaching tasks. For instance, teachers do not need to draw up and monitor individual education plans. Children work at their own pace, with virtually all of them learning to read by the end of first grade, or first grade summer school.

Nor do Spalding teachers have to devote a lot of time to determine proper placement in special education classes for learning disabled or behaviorally impaired children, because there are very few of them, if any.

Some of you are saying, this lady lives in fantasyland, what she says is not possible to do. But I tell you, it is possible.

And putting Spalding in across the Nation would move our children years ahead of what they do now in elementary school, move them to levels attained in countries more literate than ours.

We would have to rewrite curricula and do a lot of new planning, but elementary schools would be more interesting, more fun, and more productive for it.

Do I live in fantasyland? Well, I have brought three teenage boys today to help me convince you.

They all learned to print, spell, and read by the Spalding Method in their early elementary grades. Their parents drove them 40 miles each day to attend a Spalding school in a poor neighborhood, where the teachers had been trained by Oma Riggs. These boys are my exhibits 1, 2, and 3. You can ask them questions about their experiences with Spalding and about how they feel about them now.

Matt Jordan says that he read at just below average level in the first and second grades in his home school. He entered the Spalding school along with two older brothers who were having great difficulties, and attended third and fourth grades there, soon testing at the 99th percentile. He has, he says, a strong base now in reading, spelling, and writing that is very helpful to him.

Dennis McQuillen entered the same school in the third grade, almost a disaster case. He had already taken first grade twice and had not learned to read or write by the end of the second, and he knew he was dumb. By the end of one year of Spalding, he was writing and reading, was at grade level, and knew he was just like the other kids.

He and his two sisters stayed at the school for 4 years and then went back to the neighborhood school, where Dennis made the honor roll in junior high. Today he is earning B's and C's in high school and is getting a good education.

Jason Paladino says he was an average student in first grade, but his older brother was having difficulty in grade four. Both boys went to the Spalding school for only 1 year because the family moved to Valentine, NE.

The older boy got back to grade level in that 1 year, and Jason says he himself learned so much in the second grade that he was at the top of his class afterwards. These boys have come today to do what they can to help save children of America from illiteracy.

How can you gentlemen of Congress help? You could blast out the word that millions of American children are not being taught to read. You can shock those of us who can read, and whose children can read, out of our complacency.

You can seize on an existing method that works marvelously and use it to start now a nationwide campaign to make sure that every man, woman and child can read, and does read every day. You can put our best marketers to work to sell the campaign, and our best teachers to work to lead it.

You can support Senator Zorinsky and get every Member of Congress behind the literacy campaign. You can reach down to the bottom of the well of illiterates, find them, teach them, enfranchise them.

Our country cannot have widespread illiteracy and remain strong. We cannot be a united nation, most of us educated, but millions of us not able to read. And this does not have to be.

But if it is not to be, we must move a few mountains. Some of them will take a very big shove.

I leave it to the boys to convince you that if we start today and pull together, we could go a long way in a couple of years toward removing our bottleneck of illiteracy.

Chairman **Hawkins**. Thank you.

The final witness on the panel is Dr. Dorothy Strickland, professor of education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City, NY.

Dr. Strickland, we welcome you.

Dr. **Strickland**. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education, I am, as was just mentioned, Dorothy Strickland, and I am a professor of education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

My professional experience includes 6 years as a classroom teacher and 5 years as a reading consultant and learning disabilities specialist.

I am a past president of the International Reading Association, and I recently served as a member of the Commission on Reading which produced "Becoming a Nation of Readers."

I am a teacher trainer. I research and write about children's language development, their reading and writing, and children's literature.

Most important, I want you to know that I get into classrooms on a regular basis. This past year I have been working with kindergarten and fourth grade teachers, investigating effective ways to teach reading and writing.

I am particularly interested in kindergarten because, as you may know, much of what we once thought of as beginning reading in first grade is now being taught in kindergarten.

It is extremely important that we give these young children a good start, and that means a developmentally appropriate reading instruction for the kindergarten age level child.

I am here today to testify on the topic of learning of read and reading instruction in our Nation's schools, and I am separating learning to read and reading instruction because I think that we need to look at the learner first and what the learner does.

I hope that what you will hear is a comprehensive and balanced view of what is needed.

What do skilled readers do when they read? Skilled readers, whether they are kindergarten, youngsters, first grade, high school, or beyond, have certain things in common. And when I say skilled, I am talking about skilled in terms of that developmental age.

First of all, they make predictions based on their knowledge of the language. And we have already heard this morning that they do come to school with strong knowledge base of the language and their knowledge of the world.

Even in kindergarten, before we read aloud to youngsters, we show them the cover of the book and we talk about what this book might be about, and as we read we talk about what might happen next. We are trying to help them to begin very early to think with the text.

What do skilled readers do when they read? Well, they move along in the text, confirming the predictions, and they use several cueing systems. They certainly do use letter sound cues, phonics. They also use word meaning cues and sentence structure cues. They use their knowledge of the language, and that includes a great many things.

Skilled readers use the three cueing systems and they use them together. For example, if I were to say to you, Jack ate bread and blank, and asked you to fill in the word, more than likely you would give me butter or cheese or some word that made sense. That is, you are making an inference in terms of the semantics, the word meanings. And the words that you would give me would be nouns, because those are the words that would fit in that slot.

If I were to write in there in that blank, b-u-t-t-e-r, now you have another cueing system to go by. You not only have semantics and structure, but now you have sound-symbol relationships. You put them all together and you come up with the correct word.

Finally, what do skilled readers do when they read? They understand the message. There is no reading, no reading, if there is no understanding. Understanding is the ultimate goal.

Therefore, understanding must be an integral part of reading.

In my prepared document you will see a list of sentences, headed by the letters, m-e-a-n. When we look at that group of letters, we can pronounce mean, but indeed that has little meaning unless we look at that word in a sentence.

For example, Hansel and Gretel had a mean stepmother. In that sentence the word, mean, means a particular thing and is used in a particular way.

This trip will mean a lot to him. I didn't mean it. The mean was 7.2. Each time we can pronounce it exactly the same way, but each time the word functions differently, both in terms of its meaning and in terms of its use in the sentence.

Finally, sorry, I didn't mean strawberry, I meant cherry. Well, we have the "e-a" combination of letters, but indeed if you understand what the words mean and how they are used in a sentence, you certainly are not going to pronounce the "e-a" in exactly the same way.

Reading is even more than simply understanding the relationships among words in a sentence. Reading involves the relationships among sentences in paragraphs, and among paragraphs in a longer passage.

Getting the gist, the main idea, the essence of the whole test.

I think each of us this morning on this panel is hoping that you will get the essence of what we have to say.

Reading is a constructive process. Phonics plays an important role in all of this, but it is only one part and it does not operate alone.

Effective reading instruction makes use of all three cueing systems in combination.

Skilled readers are wide readers. The relationship between voluntary reading or independent reading and reading achievement is extremely high. We must have good literature in the classrooms and we must start very early with good literature, and that means the literature children read as well as indeed the literature that is read to them.

Good instruction capitalizes on the relationship between reading and writing. They are language processes, and so everything that we do with language has an impact on every aspect of language.

We all know, and certainly we have heard this morning, that there is a disparity between achievers and non-achievers in our society.

The recent report on reading achievement by the National Assessment of Educational Progress makes this point quite clear.

Students who are drawn from segments of society that are often outside the mainstream of our nation's economic life display levels of reaching achievement that are significantly below those of other groups. These students are making impressive gains, but a gap in achievement still exists.

Much of my work has been with these youngsters. A large number of such students are enrolled in chapter 1 programs. These students need our help. Their families need our help.

Why limit them? They need instructional programs that give them all the reading strategies they require to be better, more capable readers.

For these students, simple decoding is not enough. They must have the benefits of learning how to use all of the necessary reading cue systems, letter-sound relationships, absolutely, word meanings and language structure.

They need to be encouraged to read widely and taught how to use the information they can gain through reading.

I am going to repeat that.

They must be encouraged to read widely and taught how to use the information they can gain through reading.

If we allow these children who are—and it has been termed earlier—at risk to be deprived of extra help, the gap between the haves and the have-nots will widen.

On Tuesday I am going to speak to approximately 100 parents of children, pre-K to grade three. They are primarily hispanic and black parents, in public schools in New York City. I will be sharing with those parents the very same ideas that I am sharing with you today.

One of the things that I have learned is that the children of these parents are smart. They are eager to learn and they are adorable. That is probably not as relevant as the other two.

I have also learned, however, that their parents do care, and they care deeply about them.

Mr. Chairman, these children can think. We must not treat them as if they cannot. We must offer programs that require them to think with the text, and to think right from the beginning.

No one, absolutely no one gains from ineffective reading instruction. Not teachers, teacher educators, parents, students, or textbook publishers.

Theoretically, if we were all avid readers, we would buy books instead of hamburgers, certainly as many as hamburgers.

Mr. Chairman, I ask you to remember that reading is more than a simple, easily defined set of skills. It is a complex process involving many elements, elements which good instructional programs incorporate in a wide variety of ways.

With a balanced approach we can help nurture students who can read material, and that means understanding it, and apply the meaning of what they have read. That is the mark of an effective reader.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to share my views. I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman HAWKINS. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Dorothy Strickland follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DOROTHY STRICKLAND, PH.D.

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education, I am Dorothy Strickland, Ph.D., Professor of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. I have served as a member of the Commission on Reading that contributed to the report Becoming a Nation of Readers. My professional experience includes six years as a classroom teacher, five years as a reading consultant and Learning Disabilities Specialist, numerous publications in the areas of reading and language arts education, and research on children's language and concept development. I am a past president of the International Reading Association. I am here today to testify on the topic of reading instruction in our nation's schools.

The teaching of reading has as its primary goal the production of literate individuals—individuals who can read in the fullest sense of the word. Reading competence signifies many things, including the ability to recognize and correctly pronounce words on a page, the ability to extract the appropriate meaning of words read, and the ability to suitably use and apply the meaning of what is read. Reading is many layered process whereby numerous, interrelated elements of information are used by the reader to build meaning from written text. In short, reading is not a one-dimensional, simple process; it is a very complex one. The nature of the reading instruction we use in our schools must take this complexity into full account if we are to serve our students and our society well.

Effective reading ability is vital for a person to achieve his or her full potential in our complex society. Reading competence leads to individual independence and contributes immeasurably to the strength and vitality of our society.

In considering the question of reading and reading instruction several important points must be made.

The first is that reading and literacy learning are constructive processes. That is, the learner's knowledge of language and of the world is a vital foundation for reading ability. As the reader reads, he or she makes use of a variety of cues or cue systems. These important cue systems include letter/sound relationships (phonics), word meanings, and language structure. For effective reading to occur, all of these cue systems must operate.

A simple example will illustrate the function of these three elements and demonstrate that they are inextricably and inevitably related. Consider the simple word mean. This word consists of four different letters and occurs quite frequently in our daily language. Next, consider the following sentences in which the word mean is used:

Hansel and Gretel had a mean stepmother.
This trip will mean a lot to him.
I didn't mean it!
The mean was 7.2.
The mean was not appropriate to the end.
I didn't mean strawberry, I meant cherry.

Here we see a clear example of how three cue systems must operate in order for successful reading to occur. Certainly letter and sound relationships are important to the successful pronunciation of the word mean. But pronunciation is not, of itself, sufficient for correct reading to occur in all of the examples seen here. Word meaning in different contexts must be discerned through a process of using knowledge of language structure, alternative word meanings, and the reader's experience to confirm the appropriate denotation of the word. In other words, three important cue systems or strategies must be used if successful reading is to occur.

Reading instruction which makes full use of these important cue systems is the most effective instruction for the beginning reader. To provide the student with a constrained repertoire of reading strategies, such as one limited to mere decoding or sounding-out, is to promote a very narrow, limited reading capability. One would not argue that the ability to decode, by itself, constitutes the ability to read. If that were the case then the person who has mastered, for example, the French alphabet could claim to be able to "read" French, even though a total lack of comprehension might exist. Is this realistic or desirable? Understanding the message should be the ultimate goal of reading and, therefore, must be an integral part of reading instruction from the very beginning.

Skilled readers are also wide readers. That is, the skill of reading should lead to the habit of reading widely on a variety of subjects. According to the report, What Works, recently released by the U.S. Department of Education, reading fluency and vocabulary are increased through extensive independent reading. Such reading, especially when it is organized around the reading of good literature, builds background knowledge while exposing the child to a rich variety of language and meaning. All of these elements clearly contribute to better reading ability.

There is a well-documented and pervasive relationship between overall school achievement and reading. Students who read a lot not only read better, but they also do better in most other aspects of school as well. Students who read well also read voluntarily and often; they seek information, experience and personal growth through reading. Research shows that meaningful context enhances the word identification and comprehension process and that reading is not merely a serial process of letter by letter decoding. The fact that wide and frequent reading improves overall reading achievement is an important piece of evidence in this regard.

The strong relationship between reading and writing demonstrates the importance of a broad, constructive approach to reading instruction. A considerable body of sound research clearly demonstrates that writing is a powerful promoter of reading competence. Good writers are also good readers, and good reading programs should offer many opportunities for student writing. Studies of young children have shown that writing helps them to develop their language abilities and that these language abilities, in turn, promote better reading. Reading and writing instruction should start early and lead to life-long competencies and habits. These competencies and habits are desirable because they expand possibilities and remove limitations and, by so doing, they enable a fuller achievement of human potential. In short, limited and narrowly defined reading instruction can lead to limited abilities on the part of the reader.

There is a disparity between achievers and non-achievers in our society. The recent report on reading achievement by the National Assessment of Educational Progress makes this point quite clearly. Students who are drawn from segments of society that are often outside the mainstream of our nation's economic life display levels of reading achievement that are significantly below those of other groups. These students are making impressive gains but a gap in achievement still exists.

A large number of such students are enrolled in Chapter 1 programs. These students need our help. Why limit them? They need instructional programs that give them all the reading strategies they require to be better, more capable readers. For these students, simple decoding is not enough. They must have the benefits of learning how to use all of the necessary reading cue systems: letter/sound relationships, word meanings, and language structure. They need to be encouraged to read widely and taught how to use the information they can gain through reading. If we allow these children who are "at risk" to be deprived of extra help, the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" will widen.

We have learned a great deal about how people learn to read and what that means for classroom instruction. The research that has been carried out and reported through the many programs of study encouraged by the federal government has borne fruit. We know that reading is a constructive and complex process involving many elements. Phonics is only one of the strategies used to make sense of print. One cannot deny the function of letter/sound knowledge in beginning reading; nor can one reasonably oppose the careful, intelligent and balanced teaching of phonics in early reading instruction.

Whether or not phonics is effective is not the issue here. The issue is the negative and limiting effect of an overly-simplified concept of what constitutes reading and effective reading programs. Don't limit our students' potential by limiting reading instruction to a single, rigidly defined approach. Our students, our developing readers, must have all the benefits of our present knowledge of the reading and learning process. We must encourage the development of the richest programs of instruction possible at the earliest age to be certain that students receive all they can from our efforts. No one wishes to promote or protect ineffective reading instruction. We must apply what we know to be true about the reading and learning process if we are to be successful and do the best we can for the school children of America.

Mr. Chairman, I ask you to remember that reading is more than a simple, easily defined set of skills. It is a complex process involving many elements—elements which good instructional programs incorporate in a wide variety of ways. With a balanced approach we can help nurture students who can read material, understand it, and apply the meaning of what they have read. And that is the mark of an effective reader.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my views. I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman **Hawkins**. The Chair would like to open the questioning to Senator Zorinsky. I am quite sure that he has a tremendous interest in the statements that have been made. And then we will follow him, Mr. Fawell and then the Chair, in that order.

Senator.

Senator **Zorinsky**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Queal, what made you believe that the boys that you mentioned in your testimony could learn to read after you had been told that they couldn't read?

Mrs. **Queal**. Well, they were all three of them very clever, clever enough with language that when you would say, Donny, take off that hat, Donny would reach for another hat and put on somebody else's hat. And I would say, Tracy, you can't wear that either, and the other boy would pick up the hat. You know, they were clever people.

And also, when I was in college taking my master's degree, as part of the program they had the master's degree candidates actually take some of the tests that are administered to people that are suspected of having learning disabilities and things. And when I completed my testing, the gentleman in charge came in and said, can you read. And I said, of course. And he said, oh, yes, you are in the program here. And I said yes. And he said, well, how did you learn? I said, I don't have any idea, my father read to me books at the house and that sort of thing. And he said, well, you make me feel very uncomfortable. And I said, why? And he said, based on these tests, I would feel that you wouldn't learn reading very easily at all and would probably be placed in a learning disabilities program.

Senator **ZORINSKY**. Thank you.

Mr. Micciche, could you elaborate from your testimony on why your costs for reading instruction dropped, and why you have less need now for remediation?

Mr. **MICCICHE**. Yes, sir. The standard type to reading package that most school districts have with the look-say programs have a built in obsolescence to them, except for the hardcover book.

Workbooks which today run anywhere from $3.85 to $4.25 on the average are designed to be written in by a student and then discarded at the end of the year, another one bought the next year. There is also other material that goes along with it.

We were into a program that was published by the Scott-Foresman Corp., which is a very common and widely used reading system, which has all these characteristics.

Our intent was not so much to reduce costs but to get a reading program that worked. We just happened to get lucky in both directions when we put our current phonics program in. It is a program that was mentioned here several times today, the Spalding program.

The cost of the program today runs, as I said, about $2.25 per child per year. The figure was variable in the beginning because we were doing more intensive training in the beginning. Our training now runs us about $1,000 a year for all the teachers in my district.

We purchased textbooks, hardcover literature books that we consider to be excellent literature. They are from the 0pen Court Headway Series, that run about $11 a book, and we expect about a 12- to 13-year amortization period on those before we have to replace them.

Putting all these costs together, taking everything that we have spent and our planning costs for the future, we are spending about $2.25 per kid per year.

Senator **ZORINSKY**. Thank you, Mr. Micciche.

Mrs. Mactier, these young students you have brought with you, do they understand how they were able to read through a different process, other than the original one that they were taught? Do they understand the difference? Or is it just that now they can read and that is great?

Mrs. **MACTIER**. Matthew, would you like to give an answer to that one? Here, come up to the mike.

Senator **ZORINSKY**. Incidentally, I think it is wonderful that these young people are taking part in the legislative process, so to speak, of our Government, and hopefully they will understand that some people in this country feel they are voices in the wilderness, but you can be a voice in Washington, D.C. also, and participate in your Government. This is one of the few countries in the world that you can do that.

Please.

Mr. **Jordan**. What is the question you want me to answer, again?

Senator **Zorinsky**. Well, I have to also probably tell you there are two things Senators like to hear, and that is their own name and their voice.

But the question was, do you understand within yourself how initially you had a problem in reading, as opposed to being taught a different method which enabled you to overcome the deficiency that you previously had in reading, to enable you to catch up with the rest of your class?

Mr. **Jordan**. OK. Well, when I was in first and second grade, I was taught a reading program from like a hard textbook, probably Scott-Foresman, and it wasn't the basics. It was the visual, like everyone has been talking about.

Then when I went to this school that had the Spalding program, I was introduced to a program that taught just the basics.

You know, you can look at a picture and say, cat, you know, but if someone tells you to spell cat and you don't know how, you know, there is no way you are ever going to be able to write out stories or whatever.

So, you have got to be able to comprehend what you are reading, but first, before all of that, you need to be able to read sentences and words and be able to spell.

Senator **Zorinsky**. So, you feel there was a distinct difference between the method by which you learned to read later, as opposed to the original method?

Mr. **Jordan**. Yes, a severe difference.

Senator **Zorinsky**. Now, was this explained to you or did you just realize this?

Mr. **Jordan**. What do you mean by explained?

Senator **Zorinsky**. Did somebody say, now we are going to teach you differently, and this will help you better understand how to learn to read?

Mr. **Jordan**. Yes. They said, we are going to teach you the basics, this is going to be like from the beginning. And, you know, I thought, oh, my God, it is going to take a long time to learn. But it is a very simple process and was very easy to pick up.

Senator **Zorinsky**. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have no further questions.

Chairman **Hawkins**. Mr. Fawell.

Mr. **Fawell**. Yes, Mr. Chairman. I am sorry I am late. The two witnesses I did listen to were very interesting.

I happen to have a daughter who is a kindergarten teacher, and I am going to take a lot of this testimony back and discuss matters with her. I should perhaps better comprehend whether she is using phonics in kindergarten.

But let me ask this question: I believe Ms. Queal, your statement about noting clever people and getting a comprehension that, hey, these kids are bright enough, they ought to be able to read, reminds me when I was in high school and earlier in junior high school how I had grown up with kids—I remember one who was an excellent quarterback, much better than I could ever be in being able to remember all the plays, et cetera, and yet he was considered dumb, he couldn't read.

Is that what you are talking about? People who have just native intelligence.

Mrs. QUEAL. Yes. And I have today Tracy Willyard here, and he is one of these three, probably would have been lost, boys.

It really is sad to see someone that is that intelligent and all their energies are going toward disruption of a school program, rather than toward building themselves and the school programs with it. I just felt out of self-defense, if nothing else, if I could just turn this around, I had to try something.

Mr. FAWELL. My daughter went to Michigan State and thought they had early education courses that were outstanding. But are these early education courses not emphasizing this, and if so, why not?

Mrs. QUEAL. Well, there are a couple of problems here. I am a junior and senior high specialist particularly, and it is pretty much assumed that once you are in junior high, if you haven't learned to read, you are not going to learn to read, and you are put in special programs in order to try to give you the highest quality of education possible.

You know, how much education can you get as a non-reader? It is quite difficult, because the setting is designed for literate people.

So, junior and senior high teachers are typically not trained in reading at all.

I remember my special education course in methods gave us all sorts of information about reading. I mean, I just don't even remember how many hundreds of things they talked about in reading, but they didn't give us a process to imitate.

Now, in all the time I have been teaching and doing things with education, I have had two courses that really helped. One was a course sponsored by the Department of Defense in the—it was the Bay Area writers project, and the instructor was a lady named Joan Gibbons.

Mr. FAWELL. Department of Defense?

Mrs. QUEAL. Yes. And she used the teachers as her students, and she modeled for us ways to teach writing. And everybody was sort of, oh, I don't want to do this, and 16 hours, and you know, that will be terrible. But we all did it and it was interesting, walking down the halls in the next few days and weeks, to see how many of those teachers had picked up methods that had been taught and were using them in the classroom.

We need models. You know, people want to do a wonderful job teaching. It is not that we aren't interested in kids and don't want to do a good job.

Mr. FAWELL. But our institutions of higher learning, in early education especially, are not teaching this as a mode of early education?

Mrs. QUEAL. Well, I have a Master's Degree and I was not taught—I was given methods in special education, as well, and that was, again, selecting one of the hundreds of things you had been given and teaching a lesson on one of those hundreds of things. And that is fairly difficult for a beginner. And really, you can imagine yourself, somebody giving you five textbooks on the subject of reading and then saying, OK, now you can do it, go ahead.

Mr. **Fawell**. I wonder if any of the other witnesses know of institutions of higher learning who, in early education areas, do emphasize phonics and the Spalding method?

Mrs. **Queal**. I really can't address that question, because I don't know.

Mr. **Fawell**. Any of the witnesses, could they respond, or care to respond to that question?

Dr. **Strickland**. I think the question, as I understand it, is what schools of higher education emphasize phonics. Isn't that the question?

Mr. **Fawell**. Yes, it is.

Dr. **Strickland**. I would not pretend to answer that or to speak in terms of all institutions of higher education. My experience has been that none of them deemphasize it and that phonics is very much a part of the methods courses that I know about, and the people with whom I have associated as teacher trainers, and it is definitely an important part.

Also the writing. It is interesting, you mentioned writing, because in children's writing, particularly in kindergarten, it is wonderful to see how they are using the phonics that they know to produce written text. So that phonics is very much in evidence.

Mrs. **Queal**. But as a process——

Dr. **Strickland**. That is precisely the writing process that I am talking about, yes, that is exactly it.

Mrs. **Queal**. Mine were not process-oriented courses.

Mr. **Fawell**. The gentleman there?

Mr. **Richardson**. I am Charlie Richardson, Mr Fawell.

I went through what passes for teacher training at a teacher training institution on Long Island fairly late in life, after I had been 25 years in engineering. So, I looked at these things perhaps with a little bit more critical viewpoint than, say, a 19- or 20-year-old person just getting out into that milieu for the first time.

I was very appalled at what I thought was a lack of common sense process in teaching a model of how to teach reading. They danced all around the subject. They talked about looking for configuration clues, the length, and shape of the word and taking a guess, and I just couldn't see the sense to that at all.

There was one reading teacher who was an adjunct professor, not one of the full time staff, who did work some phonics into his course, and I learned a great deal about good material from him, which I have in subsequent years incorporated into the learning center program which I was operating.

And yet that particular adjunct professor was at odds with the directors of the education department of that school, and they told him, hey, knock off the phonics if you want to hang around here. He later left that school and he is not there any longer.

Subsequently, after I had finished my special education work, that same institution recognized that I was doing a little bit more than usual on the outside, they called me to teach a course in special education materials and methods.

So, I served for a time as a teacher in one of these training institutions.

Now, the class that I was assigned to teach were a group of seniors who had supposedly been through 4 years of the teacher training, and the department chairman said, you won't have any trouble with these, these are the cream of the crop, these are special education students.

Now, this was a six credit course for seniors. Well, these students, most of them, had not learned to read by phonics, let alone had any idea of how to teach it.

In most any profession, say in engineering, for instance, we are taught about the contributions of the various researchers and practitioners to our foundational art, and so forth, the great mathematicians, physicists, and so forth.

Well, one of the great contributors to the special education knowledge in this country was Dr. Samuel Orton, who was the legator of the Orton Dyslexia Society. He was a physician who was an early interested party in why do certain kids have difficulties in reading, writing, and spelling, and so forth. So, he was a very significant contributor.

These kids had never heard of Orton. Now, some of Orton's research is the basis for all of the reading programs that are used in remedial areas today, Slingerland, Frenault, Spalding. Spalding was a colleague of Dr. Orton. It was some of his influence, I am sure, that helped her design this program that these other people here have talked about.

So that I see great reluctance of the teacher training institutions of which I am aware, and say by anecdotal evidence from colleagues who have gone to other similar institutions and they come back and tell me, no, they don't teach phonics, they actually downplay it.

Mr. **FAWELL**. Thank you.

I have no further questions, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman **HAWKINS**. If we were to believe most of the witnesses today, then we would have to conclude that much of what we have done in Federal aid to education since 1965 has been too expensive and perhaps ineffective. We would almost have to conclude that Head Start and compensatory education have received too much Federal aid and that we should have taught phonics from the very beginning.

You would almost have to, it would seem to me, fault the Department of Education, which has not provided leadership and technical assistance in steering the State and local educational systems in a different direction, and conclude that their recent report, "What Works," did not suggest the right things to do. We probably would have to also criticize the teachers' colleges for not having taught teachers what they should have taught.

This might be a conclusion that a reasonable person would reach, that everybody seems to be going astray and that we therefore are not wisely investing our money.

Now, are all of these conclusions correct? Is this the situation we face in singling out one method of approach and, in a sense, saying that that is sufficient for the educational process?

Yes, Mrs. Mactier.

Mrs. **MACTIER**. There is a national problem in existence that cannot be argued with. I think you should look into these approaches that we are talking about, at least, and make a determination of the most effective of them.

Chairman HAWKINS. Well, we are certainly doing that.

Mrs. MACTIER. Fine.

Chairman HAWKINS. Senator Zorinsky is going to make sure we do it.

Mrs. MACTIER. That is to be commended.

Chairman HAWKINS. But I am wondering whether or not that is sufficient? I am not suggesting that I am in any way opposed to any of the statements that have been made. I think the witnesses have been very capable and have presented their views. But I am wondering why it is that no one seems to have caught the message?

We have had the Secretary of Education before this committee several times, and I am sure that he is very much in favor of economizing, as a matter of fact almost to a fault, according to the Chair at least. And if we are not using or, let's us say, encouraging the proper approach, why is it that these other individuals or groups that I have mentioned have been, in a sense, backward in getting the message?

Mrs. MACTIER. Congressman Hawkins, I don't know if you can appreciate the depth of this ideology that has been taught to every teacher and every teacher administrator in this country since 1930. They simply say, if you teach children to spell the sounds, they will not comprehend. When teachers tell that to parents, parents have to believe it. When every teachers college tells that to teachers, it is sort of like the Bible, and it has been extremely hard to break in through that concept. It is coming now in the book you mentioned, the recent "What Works," I believe. The Secretary does say that phonics must be taught.

Jean Chall, I heard Jean Chall talk at the elementary school center meeting in January, and she came right out, finally, and said—Jean Chall is the researcher at Harvard Teacher College—she came right out finally and said, we must teach our 4- and 5-year-olds to read, professional people are doing this, we must teach all of our children to read, and the way to teach them is by teaching them phonics.

So, a lot of progress is being made.

Also, the American Broadcasting Company Television Corp. and the National Education Corp. are getting together to have a series of broadcasts on literacy starting next fall. This would be a wonderful way to start and define the most effective program there is, and teach it on a national network.

You see, the teachers are doing what they know to do. So, it is going to be very hard to get every teacher in the land turned around from this ideology with which they have been imbued. But with a national television network and with your committee, and with the Senator's people, all moving in the direction of finding one method and putting it out across the country so that we could all teach each other and talk to each other about it and help each other, we could get a whole lot done.

Chairman HAWKINS. Well, this is something more than reading, however. One might be a good reader and yet a very bad engineer. Isn't that so, Mr. Richardson? Just being able to read isn't enough. Is there something extra that is needed in connection with reading which may, obviously, be combined with phonics? Is there something extra, something else that is needed, other than just the ability to read?

Mr. **Richardson**. Well, reading is, of course, the basic ingredient, and I think it is important how early a student gets into the stream of reading for information.

We have to distinguish between learning to read and reading to learn. And if the learning to read process is stretched out over 5 or 6 years with mediocre effects, then the reading to learn process may not ever get off the ground to where the student is managing information properly.

It may interest you to know that this research I spoke of back in the 1960's, there has been no contravening research, nothing to say that other methods, such as the whole word approach, is any superior method. But yet it is being used in so many of our schools, it is incomprehensible, the stonewalling that is occurring.

An organization which has been mentioned previously, Reading Reform Foundation, has been struggling for the past 25 years, and on a national scale I would say they have hardly caused a ripple in the stonewall of misinformation and ignorance which pervades the area of knowledge of how to teach reading.

Chairman **Hawkins**. Pardon me, Mr. Richardson, but the Chair must respond to those bells to vote. Senator Zorinsky has agreed to continue the hearing. I would think that it is possible that it may conclude before I return, but Mr. Goodling had asked that his staff propound some questions that he wanted to have answered.

Again, I would like to thank the witnesses for their contribution, to assure you that we will continue, and in conjunction with Senator Zorinsky, we will announce additional hearings on the subject and will pursue this subject matter to its logical conclusion.

With that, may I ask Senator Zorinsky then to take over the chair and to proceed with the hearing. Thank you very much.

Senator **Zorinsky**. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and again thank you very much for holding these hearings.

Would the staff member representing Congressman Goodling please identify himself and then proceed with the questions on behalf of the Congressman?

Mr. **Hartman**. Thank you.

Congressman Goodling asked me to thank you for coming today. He is very concerned and interested in the problem of illiteracy and is sorry he had to leave for another appointment that he had been committed to.

Actually, I am afraid it isn't quite the form of a question, but more of a statement, but if you want to react to it, I am sure I could pass along your reactions.

He wrote it down, and let me just read it.

"My wife is a first grade teacher"—and I should add, Mr. Goodling also has been a teacher, a superintendent and school board member, so he, I think, understands and is interested in your comments as teachers.

My wife is a first grade teacher, an outstanding reading teacher according to parents and students, who emphasizes phonics no matter what program the district chooses.

However, neither she or I would want to simplify the illiteracy problem to the point that some would believe phonics is the cure-all to a very serious and complex problem.

The following words, many taken from today's testimony, may present a phonics problem to the students.

I think his point here was that while he and his wife agree that phonics is an important element in any instructional program, that there are obviously words and further tests and goals of reading that perhaps go beyond the phonics approach.

Some of the words he pulled out were, for example, bought, doubt, weight, country, and we could go on. He asked me to list some, and that is as far as I could get.

Second, I would be very interested in a breakdown of the 2 to 3 million figure used as the yearly increase of illiterates in the country. For example, how many become illiterate because of language barriers and since they come here as immigrants with language problems, in a sense, aren't created through our teaching problem; how many because of new definitions of illiteracy, how many never before noticed because functional illiterates could find jobs before without much difficulty?

Functional illiteracy is our No. 1 problem facing us. But we must look at the breakdown in the family, the many new demands thrust upon our educational system, and a multitude of changes that have taken place in our society during the last 50 years, in addition to instructional methods, if we are to solve this problem.

He thanks you, and thank you for your time.

Senator Zorinsky. Would anyone care to respond?

Mr. Micciche. Thank you.

If I may react to that, I hadn't known that Congressman Goodling had been a school administrator in the past, and perhaps, if you could ask him to recall what he observed when he walked into any of his foreign language classrooms at the high school level, where French or German or Spanish, or any language was being taught, I will guarantee that he found that children were taught a foreign language, who had never been exposed to it before, from a strictly phonetic point of view.

All languages except English seem to be taught from a phonetic point of view in most American classrooms.

You will find a short contrast by walking into any first or second grade classroom, using a whole word or a look-say system, compared to how children are taught when they are exposed to a new language for the first time.

The logic, especially approaching a mature mind, in teaching a language that is based on an alphabet, the logic is strictly phonic. It is the first step.

And I agree that it is not the only thing, but unless that first step, that first foundation stone is put in place, the house will topple.

Mr. Hartman. He did actually make a comment to me, as you may be aware, bilingual education is another issue which we have discussed here in our committee, and in that area there are people who are proponents of the method, English as a second language, and he asked me if, in fact, in that method, if you observed the classrooms, it is usually done by—it doesn't seem to him or myself a phonics approach, that they just start talking, using words, and the teacher never speaks the other language.

Does that jibe with the phonics approach?

Mr. MICCICHE. I am not that familiar with that, but it sounds more like a life experience approach to language, and perhaps someone a little bit more familiar with that can perhaps comment better to that effect.

Dr. STRICKLAND. I simply wanted to comment that if Congressman Goodling had walked into a high school classroom, he might have heard students talking in a language immersion kind of approach, where they really get a feel for the language, a sense of the language, and, indeed, move from there to components of the language.

But there is an attempt in most schools today to try and use the way we learn first language, and then move to print, and very much the same way in the second language learning.

Mrs. MACTIER. I would like to talk about that. I have personally studied a lot of foreign language, and this I know for a fact, that people need to learn to speak and talk at the same time as they learn to write. They are different components, and if you learn one before you learn the other, you are very apt not to learn the other.

So that you need to learn the grammar at the same time you learn to talk, at the same time you learn to write.

But I would also like to say regarding the fact that reading is complex and not simple, why make something complex that is simple?

Jean Chall, in her latest book—I heard her mention it at this same conference—has divided reading into levels, stages she calls them, and the first stage or the zero stage is where a child knows nothing, and the first stage and second stage are learning phonics.

And she says you simply do not start interpreting and talking about meaning until after children learn the basic—are able to read.

And that is not hard. It is relatively simple to do. I can do it myself using the Spalding Method. It is not complicated. Why complicate it?

Senator ZORINSKY. Would someone like to respond.

Mr. HARTMAN. I think his point, and I think he would agree with you that phonics—in his opening statement, that he and his wife, as a teacher, would agree with you. But that the 2.6 million or however many illiterates are said to be added to the illiterate population each year, that there is a proportion of those students who are not—it is not as a result of a breakdown in the educational system, but, in fact, I believe over half of those, that number, is just based on the number of immigrants who come to our country without speaking English and have never been in our educational system.

So, he was just trying to make the distinction that that is not a real index of the failure, not that there isn't a problem in the educational system. There obviously is. But that isn't a good index, and someone had used that in their testimony, and he wanted to make that distinction, that there are other sources feeding into that overall number.

Mr. RICHARDSON. May I react to something about his concern with the irregularities of English?

Those words comprise less than 15 percent of our language. If the student is initially taught the rules which apply to the other 85 percent, then he can learn this 15 percent on the basis of individual irregularities, which is a much more efficient system than learning 100 percent of the language by sight memorization and as an irregular process.

The method which teaches whole-word memorization first obscures the structure of the language and tends to make children feel that that is the only way to do it.

People who would deride the phonics methods as far as its structural nature is concerned, make fun of the simple sentences like "Matt sat on a fat cat," and so forth as being nonsensical. But what they fail to realize is that for the beginning reader it is not the content that he is interested in, it is simply the act of successful reading that turns him on to the learning process.

Your very beginning reader doesn't care what it says as long as he can read what it says. The meanings will come later. But if he misses that first step, then his foundation is severely impaired.

Mrs. **Queal**. I teach retarded youngsters, as well, and I have—at the same time that I was working with Tracy, I had another student, and you could teach him to read the word, "committee," or "chairman," but he wouldn't necessarily know what he had said. So, I can appreciate the idea that without the comprehension you haven't got much.

But for most children, why not give it a try? What have they got to lose by learning how to crack the code?

Some of them will not be able to make use of it, some of them are too disturbed, some of them have tragic home lives, but at least we can try to help fix the decoding process.

Mrs. **Mactier**. I would, with your permission, like to call on Dennis here. Dennis entered third grade unable to read and I think with severe psychological problems, and perhaps he would like to tell you what he thinks about what happened to him. Would that be all right?

Senator **Zorinsky**. Yes, certainly.

Mr. **McQuillen**. When I first started school at first and second, I was in this program—I don't know what it was called—and they were trying to teach me how exactly to read, and I couldn't pick up on it. You know, I couldn't understand what they were trying to teach me.

They would give you like a cat and you would have to see if you could spell it and stuff. But not knowing the basics of like what "A" means—that has three different sounds to it, you know. If I see cat and then see another word with an "A" in it, I would still try saying it the same way.

Phonics has taught me the different ways, how the English language is used, how they write it differently. Because something like o-u-g-h-t, that has six different sounds. If you see a word like car, you know it is ah. But then if you see another word, you might try doing it the same way.

If you can just break it down the way phonics does, you can learn how to read it, and then after that you have got your base, and so then you can start learning what the words mean and the words come along.

At second grade I could not read, and my mom got to talking to this lady—I don't know her name—but my mom went to this clinic where phonics is and they taught her, and she liked it, and then I went to summer school between second grade, and I was put into this other smaller school where they taught phonics.

During that summer I took phonics and I really started to understand more of the English language by this one teacher.

When I got to third grade at this new school, they kept on teaching me, you know, the phonics, so I knew it better, and then after a while I just started, my grades started going from D's and F's up to D's and C's, then C's and B's, and now anything I want to learn, I can try, and I can usually get it.

I am a slow learner, but once I do learn it, I do know it. Without reading, I would have never learned how to do any of this and get any grades that I am getting now.

Senator Zorinsky. Thank you very much. How did you come here? I know probably on an airplane, but I mean, where did you get the money to buy your ticket?

Mr. McQuillen. My parents.

Senator Zorinsky. Well, thank you very much. You know, it is great when people are concerned enough about the future. The strength of this country is the education of its people, and it is wonderful to have people like yourselves that would voluntarily come back here at your own cost. It seems in this day and age everybody usually tries to get somebody to pay for them, somehow, some way. You think enough about the future of the Nation and education to have made a contribution today, and I want to thank you for being here.

Mr. McQuillen. Thank you.

Senator Zorinsky. I would just like to, in concluding—unless the Congressman has any other further questions—ask if any of the panelists would care to comment on the testimony of another member of the panel, if there is any desire to do that? On any of the testimony that one of you may have given, is there any rebuttal or statement that you want to make on the statement of another panelist?

Dr. Strickland. I would like to follow up on Dennis, because I think that this will indeed do the same thing.

Senator Zorinsky. OK.

Dr. Strickland. I would like to congratulate him, too. He is confident and it is wonderful to see that kind of success in any reader.

I must say, however, that knowing all the sounds of o-u-g-h does not necessarily make a reader. I mean, it is possible to know that and not be able to read. On the other hand, I think there are many people in this room who read quite well and don't know all the sounds of o-u-g-h.

Phonics is being taught. You know, this dichotomy or this contradiction between whole-word and phonics is really a nonissue. It is there. If anything, we are doing a very good job of teaching phonics in this country, and not a very good job of helping youngsters to use and apply what they read, which is really what we need.

It does not mean eliminating phonics and it does mean the kinds of things that other panelists have been saying here, in that we need a strong program to help youngsters decode and to use everything that they know about the patterns of the language, absolutely. But that is only one part of it.

Let's not fall in the trap of putting everything in polar kinds of considerations. I don't think that is useful or helpful. Indeed, I think you could probably take any method or approach in the country today and bring youngsters into this room who have succeeded with it, and we would all be delighted.

The fact remains that there is no one program, at least at this point, that is successful with all learners, and that we still have a lot to learn.

I think that part of the success here, and it is beautiful to see, is that there is such confidence in these kids and that there are teachers here who talk about success and their beliefs in students. All of those things help to make a reader.

Senator **Zorinsky**. Yes, Mr. Micciche.

Mr. **Micciche**. If I may make some comments on some of the things that you pointed out.

"Jack ate bread and blank" was one of the examples that you used. If you are asking a child to put a word in there, you are asking a child to put a word in there, period. You are not asking a child to read. You can't read a blank line. That is not reading.

Cueing signals or miscue theory is not a valid way to begin the process of having children recognize words.

I certainly don't want the young men and women of this country who are in our military installations sitting down with a red and a yellow button in front of them, not knowing which one to use but guessing or cueing that, gee, red is important, I think I will push that one and see what happens.

A rather dramatic and hyperbolic situation, of course, but basically the underlying philosophy, I feel, is the same with reading.

I don't want my children learning to read by guessing at words. I want them to have the tools that they need to be able to attack the good literature you said should be in the classroom. That literature is meaningless to them unless it is accessible to them, and accessibility comes from having the fundamental tool, knowledge, first.

I am not arguing that we shouldn't teach kids thought processes, thinking processes, inferential skills, all the other things that go along with reading. They come and they are necessary to be there. But I do feel that children come to school equipped with the mental capacity, the raw native ability, to function in a language environment if they are given the tool, knowledge, in a sequential process, if they are given those skills in the order in which they belong there.

I do know that from all the brain study information that has been done, the normal human brain is predisposed to language. Language comes fairly automatically because of the types of neuro connections that are in the brain.

Reading is not an automatic process that is built into the biological system, unlike language, the ability to speak and listen to language, and reading has to be taught, just as driving a car has to be taught, just as any other skill that we have put upon ourselves in a social environment must be taught.

I said earlier in my testimony that a person who was brought up in a society, a primitive society that does not have a written language is not illiterate. There is no such thing as illiteracy in languages that do not have writing as a part of their culture. But once the mechanism of written language has been invented and has been used to transmit thoughts across years, across time, anybody who doesn't access that language properly will be illiterate in that society.

Establish the tool first, then go on to the major things like comprehension.

Senator **Zorinsky**. Yes, Mr. Richardson.

Mr. **Richardson**. I would like also to respond to the cueing theory or the psycholinguistic guessing of what should that next word be.

This, I believe, has been overplayed by the whole-word advocates as a substitute or a crutch for students who have poor decoding skills, that they have to be looking for something else to tell them what that next word is going to be.

Now, just a simple sentence, "Johnny ate bread and," to say that that next word has to be a noun, I disagree. The best reason for a child depending on decoding skills, that he can take each word as it comes and he can switch signals as that next word unfolds. That next phrase could simply be, "Johnny ate break and ran home." It does not have to be a noun. And a student who is locked into psycholinguistic guessing is going to be constrained on his fluency and comprehension.

I think the early recognition of any word that comes next in the sentence, and being able to assimilate that, no matter whether it is a noun, a verb, or an adverb, something that is going to switch the signals where that sentence is going, is the most important kind of fluent comprehension, and that will only be brought about in a student by practicing decoding skills to automatic levels very early in his reading career.

Senator **Zorinsky**. Ms. Mactier, did you have any comment you wanted to make?

Mrs. **Mactier**. We really, all of us, want the same thing, and we all have very much in comment, and I agree with everything that has been said, particularly with the fact that Ms. Strickland brought out that children need to read good literature.

Children need to read, and the sooner they read, the better. And young children, particularly, are very motivated to read, and when we can teach children to read in a couple of months time, ages 4, 5 and 6, and then get them reading and get them having a good time reading, we have come a long way towards winning the battle.

Teaching children the six sounds of o-u-g-h simply enables them to tell the difference between "through" and "though" and "bough" and "rough," so that they aren't confused by it, and it is a very simple thing. All children learn it very quickly.

It just gets us all in the way we all want to go, and I know we can all work together to get there.

Senator **Zorinsky**. Thank you very, very much for your participation as a panel in today's hearing, and as the chairman pointed out, there will be additional hearings.

Again, thank you on behalf of this committee and myself personally for being here. It is nice to be important but it is more important to be nice, and certainly you have been that today.

Thank you very much for being here. We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:34 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

[Additional material submitted for the record follows:]

BARRY GOLDWATER, ARIZONA, CHAIRMAN
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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 20, 1986

The Honorable Augustus Hawkins
United States Representative
2371 Rayburn
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Gus:

It would be much appreciated if you would include the enclosed statement in the Hearing Record on the causes of illiteracy which is being held today by your House Committee on Education and Labor.

Thank you for this consideration.

With best wishes,

Barry Goldwater

Barry Goldwater

STATEMENT OF SENATOR BARRY GOLDWATER

MARCH 19, 1986

MR. PRESIDENT, I RESPECTFULLY SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD AS TOMORROW THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR WILL BE HOLDING A HEARING ON THE CAUSES OF ILLITERACY AT THE REQUEST OF SENATOR ZORINSKY.

Begin

THIS HEARING HAS ALREADY RECEIVED MY STRONG SUPPORT AS I WAS A CO-SPONSOR WITH NEARLY 30 OF MY COLLEAGUES ON SENATOR ZORINSKY'S AMENDMENT TO DOD AUTHORIZATION IN FY '85. THIS AMENDMENT WAS DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY THE CAUSES OF ILLITERACY IN THE EARLY YEARS OF EDUCATION, K-3 GRADES. IT IS MY FIRM BELIEF THAT A DISCUSSION ON ILLITERACY IS WITHOUT THE HEART OF THE ARGUMENT IF THE PREVENTION OF ILLITERACY IS NOT A MAJOR FOCUS OF THE DISCUSSION. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE OVER 23 MILLION AMERICANS WHO ARE CONSIDERED ILLITERATE. I DO NOT DENY THE TREMENDOUS NEED FOR REMEDIAL READING PROGRAMS TO HELP THESE PEOPLE. MY CONCERN IS TO PREVENT THIS INCREDIBLE STATISTIC FROM INCREASING BY EVEN ONE MORE AMERICAN.

WE CANNOT CONTINUE TO TALK ABOUT ILLITERACY WITHOUT ASKING THE QUESTION: "HOW IS BEGINNING READING BEING TAUGHT IN OUR SCHOOLS?" OUR YOUNG AMERICANS START SCHOOL EAGER AND READY TO LEARN AND FOR MANY OF THESE CHILDREN THE HEALTHY SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE INTO THE WORLD OF SCHOOL AND LEARNING QUICKLY CHANGES. MANY ARE LABELED LEARNING DISABLED AND PLACED IN CLASSES APART FROM THEIR HOMEROOM. PARENTS NEED TO QUESTION WHETHER A CHILD HAS A TRUE LEARNING PROBLEM OR HAS THE CHILD BEEN TAUGHT BY AN INEFFECTIVE AND INEFFICIENT

READING PROGRAM? IT IS ONE OF THE MOST BAFFLING SITUATIONS I KNOW OF THAT SCHOOLS READILY SEEK FEDERAL FUNDS FOR REMEDIAL PROGRAMS. TO MY WAY OF THINKING, THE NEED FOR SUCH PROGRAMS INDICATES A LACK OF SUCCESS IN THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM OF THE SCHOOL. NOW, I GRANT YOU THAT SOME STUDENTS WILL NEED SPECIAL ASSISTANCE THROUGH A REMEDIAL PROGRAM, BUT THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS IN THESE PROGRAMS I HOPE WOULD BE RELATIVELY LOW.

FOR A CONCRETE EXAMPLE, I GIVE YOU THE GALLEGO SCHOOL IN THE SUNNYSIDE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF SOUTH TUCSON IN ARIZONA. THE PRINCIPAL OF GALLEGO, MRS. MUSGRAVE CHOSE TO RECEIVE NO FEDERAL FUNDS FOR THE SCHOOL. IT IS A K-6 BASICS SCHOOL WITH AN INTENSIVE PHONICS PROGRAM FOR ITS MOSTLY HISPANIC LOWER SOCIO-ECONOMIC STUDENT BODY. MANY OF THE HOUSEHOLDS DO NOT HAVE A WORKING PARENT, BUT THE SCHOOL WITH ITS DRESS AND DISCIPLINE CODE ARE FULLY SUPPORTED BY THE PARENTS. MANY OF THESE PARENTS, THEMSELVES, DO NOT SPEAK FLUENT ENGLISH; HOWEVER, THEY WANT NO SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR THEMSELVES OR THEIR CHILDREN.

GALLEGO USES THE IOWA TEST OF BASIC SKILLS AND IT IS NUMBER 1 OUT OF 16 SCHOOLS IN THE SUNNYSIDE DISTRICT WITH READING, GRAMMAR AND MATH ABOVE GRADE LEVELS IN ALL SIX GRADES. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THERE ARE 522 STUDENTS AND 22 TEACHERS. THERE ARE NO SPECIALISTS ON THE GALLEGO FACULTY. THE MORNING SCHEDULE IS CORE TIME WHICH TRANSLATES INTO 3 HOURS OF UNINTERRUPTED CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION WITH A CONCENTRATION ON PHONICS SKILLS IN THE LOWER GRADES. THE PHONICS PROGRAM OF CHOICE BY THE GALLEGO SCHOOL IS THE SPALDING PHONICS PROGRAM. THE TEACHERS AT GALLEGO WERE TAUGHT BY MRS. SPALDING, HERSELF. ALSO, THE SPALDING PHONICS PROGRAM IS THE PROGRAM OF CHOICE OF THE READING REFORM FOUNDATION OF SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA. I AM PROUD TO REPORT THE FOUNDATION HAS CHAPTERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND THE SCOTTSDALE FACILITY IS THE NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS. EACH CHAPTER HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO

UTILIZE A PHONICS PROGRAM OF THEIR OWN CHOOSING, SO NOT EVERY PROGRAM USES THE SPALDING METHOD OF TEACHING PHONICS. THE SPALDING METHOD HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY SHOWN TO BE BOTH COST-EFFECTIVE AND TIME EFFICIENT. THE COST CAN BE CONSIDERED NOMINAL AS THERE ARE FEW MATERIALS NEEDED AND IT IS EASILY TAUGHT TO LAY PEOPLE AS WELL AS TEACHERS WHO DO NOT FEEL THEY CAN TEACH EFFECTIVELY BEGINNING READING. ONE OF THE MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF THE FOUNDATION, FOUNDED BY PARENTS AND EDUCATORS IN 1961, IS TO PROVIDE A SYSTEMATIC, MULTI-SENSORY PHONICS PROGRAM FOR BEGINNING READING INSTRUCTION.

IN NOVEMBER 1985, READER'S DIGEST CARRIED AN EDITORIAL ON ILLITERACY ENTITLED: "WHY CHILDREN AREN'T READING." AT THE CLOSE OF THE EDITORIAL AS READER'S DIGEST IS KNOWN TO DO THE POSTSCRIPT STATED: "FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT TEACHING READING BY THE PHONICS METHOD," AND GAVE THE ADDRESS OF THE READING REFORM FOUNDATION IN SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA. I AM TOLD BY MRS. BETTINA RUBICAM, PRESIDENT OF THE FOUNDATION, A DEAR FRIEND AND TIRELESS WORKER IN THE FIGHT FOR LITERACY, THE FOUNDATION RECEIVED OVER 25,000 LETTERS AS A RESULT OF THE READER'S DIGEST EDITORIAL. THESE LETTERS HAD NOT ONLY BEEN SENT BY CONCERNED INDIVIDUALS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY, BUT ALSO FROM AROUND THE WORLD. THIS KIND OF RESPONSE TELLS ME THERE ARE MANY INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED WITH THE PROBLEMS OF ILLITERACY AND THEY WANT TO LEARN WHAT BEGINNING READING PROGRAMS WORK. THEY AREN'T LOOKING FOR GIMMICKS AND EXTENSIVE MATERIALS, JUST GIVE THEM WHAT WORKS.

THE READER'S DIGEST EDITORIAL STATED A BEGINNING READING PROGRAM NEEDS TO HAVE AN INTENSIVE PHONICS COMPONENT. THE READER'S DIGEST PHONICS RECOMMENDATION SUPPORTED AND GAVE CREDIT TO "BECOMING A NATION OF READERS: THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON READING" WHICH WAS SPONSORED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION. THIS REPORT STATED IN ITS OWN RECOMMENDATIONS THAT: "TEACHERS OF BEGINNING READING SHOULD PRESENT WELL-DESIGNED PHONICS

INSTRUCTION." IT WENT ON TO STATE: "THOUGH MOST CHILDREN TODAY ARE TAUGHT PHONICS, OFTEN THIS INSTRUCTION IS POORLY CONCEIVED." ACCORDING TO RICHARD C. ANDERSON, CHAIRMAN OF THIS COMMISSION, "THE REPORT CONTAINS THE MOST THOUGHTFUL, SCHOLARLY, AND COMPREHENSIVE STATEMENT THAT HAS EVER BEEN MADE ABOUT THE NATURE OF READING AND THE PRACTICES IN THE HOME AND THE SCHOOL THAT PROMOTE LITERACY."

IN ADDITION TO THIS STRONG RECOMMENDATION FOR THE NEED FOR INTENSIVE PHONICS INSTRUCTION IN BEGINNING READING PROGRAMS, THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION ON MARCH 4, 1986, RELEASED ITS LATEST REPORT ENTITLED: "WHAT WORKS: RESEARCH ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING." I WOULD LIKE TO QUOTE THE SECTION ON PHONICS IN ITS ENTIRETY AS IT GIVES NOT ONLY RESEARCH FINDINGS, BUT ALSO PROVIDES IMPORTANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON HOW WE ARRIVED AT OUR PRESENT READING DILEMMA:

> CHILDREN GET A BETTER START IN READING IF THEY ARE TAUGHT PHONICS. LEARNING PHONICS HELPS THEM TO UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LETTERS AND SOUNDS AND TO 'BREAK THE CODE' THAT LINKS THE WORDS THEY HEAR WITH THE WORDS THEY SEE IN PRINT.
>
> UNTIL THE 1930'S AND 1940'S, MOST AMERICAN CHILDREN LEARNED TO READ BY THE PHONICS METHOD, WHICH STRESSES THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SPOKEN SOUNDS AND PRINTED LETTERS. CHILDREN LEARNED THE LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET AND THE SOUNDS THOSE LETTERS REPRESENT. FOR SEVERAL DECADES THEREAFTER, HOWEVER, THE 'LOOK-SAY' APPROACH TO READING WAS DOMINANT: CHILDREN WERE TAUGHT TO IDENTIFY WHOLE WORDS IN THE BELIEF THAT THEY WOULD MAKE MORE RAPID PROGRESS IF THEY IDENTIFIED WHOLE WORDS AT A GLANCE, AS ADULTS SEEM TO. RECENT RESEARCH INDICATES THAT, ON THE AVERAGE, CHILDREN WHO ARE TAUGHT PHONICS GET OFF TO A BETTER START IN LEARNING TO READ THAN CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT TAUGHT PHONICS.
>
> IDENTIFYING WORDS QUICKLY AND ACCURATELY IS ONE OF THE CORNERSTONES OF SKILLED READING. PHONICS IMPROVES THE ABILITY OF CHILDREN BOTH TO IDENTIFY WORDS AND TO SOUND OUT NEW ONES. SOUNDING OUT THE LETTERS IN A WORD IS LIKE THE FIRST TENTATIVE STEPS OF A TODDLER: IT HELPS CHILDREN GAIN A SECURE VERBAL FOOTING AND EXPAND THEIR VOCABULARIES BEYOND THE LIMITS OF BASIC READERS.
>
> BECAUSE PHONICS IS A READING TOOL, IT IS BEST TAUGHT IN THE CONTEXT OF READING INSTRUCTION, NOT AS A SEPARATE SUBJECT TO BE MASTERED. GOOD PHONICS STRATEGIES INCLUDE TEACHING CHILDREN THE SOUNDS OF LETTERS IN ISOLATION AND IN WORDS (s/i/t), AND HOW TO BLEND THE SOUNDS TOGETHER (s-s-i-i-t).

> PHONICS SHOULD BE TAUGHT EARLY BUT NOT OVER-USED. IF PHONICS INSTRUCTION EXTENDS FOR TOO MANY YEARS, IT CAN DEFEAT THE SPIRIT AND EXCITEMENT OF LEARNING TO READ. PHONICS HELPS CHILDREN PRONOUNCE WORDS APPROXIMATELY, A SKILL THEY CAN LEARN BY THE END OF SECOND GRADE. IN THE MEANTIME, CHILDREN CAN LEARN TO PUT THEIR NEW PHONICS SKILLS TO WORK BY READING GOOD STORIES AND POEMS.

AT THIS TIME, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY, I DO NOT ALWAYS FIND MYSELF IN FAVOR OF THE REPORTS PUT OUT BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; HOWEVER, I FEEL COMPELLED TO COMMEND THE EFFORTS OF SECRETARY BENNETT AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY FINN FOR THESE REPORTS. I BELIEVE THE REPORTS ACHIEVED THEIR GOALS OF GATHERING PERTINENT AND TESTED KNOWLEDGE ON EDUCATION AND OF WIDELY DISSEMINATING THE INFORMATION IN LAYMEN'S TERMS. NOW, I CHALLENGE THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AS I HAVE THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO FIND WASTE AND ABUSE AND TO STOP FUNDING PROGRAMS THAT DO NOT WORK. THE AMERICAN PUBLIC DESERVES A FAIR RETURN ON ITS TAX DOLLARS. CONCRETE RESULTS IN READING SCORES AND A REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN BEING PLACED IN REMEDIAL READING PROGRAMS WOULD BE A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

OUR SCHOOLS SHOULD NOT BE TURNING OUT LOSERS, BUT RATHER MAKING EVERY CHILD A WINNER. MANY OF US ARE CONSTANTLY STATING HOW VALUABLE OUR CHILDREN ARE, BUT THEY ARE ALSO EXTREMELY VULNERABLE. AT A TIME WHEN THEY ARE BOTH YOUNG AND VULNERABLE IT SEEMS UNFAIR TO EXPECT SO MUCH FROM THEM. THEY ARE REPEATEDLY TESTED, BUT OUR SOCIETY SEEMS TO DEMAND THESE TESTS. WELL, IF WE ARE GOING TO TEST OUR YOUNG AT LEAST GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO SUCCEED BY USING PROVEN PROGRAMS THAT ARE BOTH EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT IN THE TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE. IT IS MY HOPE THE ABOVE REPORTS ON PHONICS AND EDUCATION AND THE UPCOMING HEARING ON THE PREVENTION OF ILLITERACY WILL BE THE NECESSARY FORCES TO REQUIRE ALL LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES TO PROVIDE AN INTENSIVE PHONICS COMPONENT IN BEGINNING READING INSTRUCTION. OUR CHILDREN DESERVE THE BEST WE HAVE TO OFFER. WHAT BETTER GIFT TO GIVE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE THAN THE ABILITY TO DECODE THE WRITTEN WORD.

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78712

March 13, 1986

Adult Performance Level Project
Education Annex S21
AC 512/471-4623

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary
and Vocational Education
U. S. House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Congressman Hawkins:

You are aware that I have written you before and that I support your much needed efforts in behalf of educational improvement and accountability.

I understand that you and your Subcommittee will be taking testimony on illiteracy at your hearing scheduled for March 20. I would like very much to be there in person, but that is not possible. I am taking the liberty, however,of providing my written testimony and I will appreciate it very much if you will have it included in the record of the illiteracy hearing.

I think a review of my contribution will indicate how very serious I believe the problem to be. Our research, in fact, indicates that the matter constitutes a serious threat to the continued advance of this nation and to our position among world leaders in the technologically sophisticated future.

Please continue your efforts. We must have consistency of leadership if we are to overcome this most serious situation. Please let me know the progress your effort is achieving and tell me if I may be of additional service.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Jim C. Cates

Jim C. Cates, Director
Adult Performance Level Porject

These comments, prepared by Jim C. Cates, Director of the Adult Performance Level Project of the College of Education of The University of Texas at Austin, are addressed to the Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education, United States House of Representatives, with the request that they be read into the record of that Sub-Committee's hearing on illiteracy scheduled for March 20, 1986.

Following its unique and comprehensive research into the scope and character of functional illiteracy in the United States over a decade ago, The Adult Performance Level Project has retained a position of respect and acceptance among its peers. Our data, and our systems, have endured and remain valid.Our concentration on the problem of functional illiteracy in America has remained steadfast so that we can say without equivocation that APL occupies a premiere position in its understanding of the problem. Staggering as were the findings we published in 1975, we are convinced the problem has grown steadily worse until, today, we face a situation of national disgrace and devastating consequence.

APL's original research dealt only with that population aged 18-65. Of that group, 19.1% or almost 23 million, were found to be functionally illiterate. An additional 33.9%, or almost 41 million, were found to function at or below a level associated only with marginal success. They could be said to operate at a 'bare survival' level. Slightly less than one-half (46.3%) of the adult population studied was found to be clearly proficient. APL's findings were widely accepted at all levels, including the federal establishment where they were accepted and announced by the then U.S. Commissioner of Education. The U.S Office of Education re-wrote sections of the Adult Education Act based on our work and to reflect an expanded concern for functional literacy (competency). In addition, there was a gratifying surge of interest and activity which developed in various states and school systems around the nation and we saw expanded activity and redirection not only in adult education programs, but also in special education, some secondary systems, and in developmental programs offered in correctional institutions. It can be said, however, that the federal action of choice was limited almost exclusively to remediation.

What is the situation in 1986? Bad as it was a decade ago, all indication is that it may be significantly worse. Is it because our efforts at remediation have been inadequate? Is it because we have failed to identify and to correct weakness and irrelevance in our public education systems and approaches? Is it because of diminished federal leadership and commitment to education coupled with diminished relevance and demand for accoutability at local levels? The answer must include all of the above. Remediation is critical and must be provided those millions who do not have the skills and the knowledge required for success in this society. Remediation alone will not win the day, however. Unless we correct and improve the basic system, it will continue annually to add to the pool of functional illiterates, and at a rate greater than remediation can salvage.

Education, as an institution, does not deserve to be, and should not be, the only 'whipping boy' in this situation. Given the very nature of its mission, however, it must bear significant responsibility for both success and failure. Generally, I think we must admit that much of the core problem results from a prolonged era since WW II when we have allowed public education to concentrate heavy resource and attention on social and athletic development at the expense of academic discipline. During the same time, we have allowed it to become almost autonomous and, worse, we have abdicated public responsibility and control by allowing the sustem to become almost entirely self policing - to determine its own pace and often its own direction. One devastating result of this abdication of control has been that the system of public education in America has not kept pace in many areas with the needs of this nation. Whatever the claim may be,there IS no easy access to the innerworkings of public education in much of the country. While there may be a great deal of lip service regarding course content responsive to to the needs of the job market, and while there is considerable rhetoric regarding the system's concern for the developmental needs of its students, the more reliable truth is that often much of public education, as a system, tends to stay well behind the needs of the economy. The society and its expectations have changed so rapidly and so remarkably and that fact only serves to widen the gap and to add to education's burden. We need to remember that teachers, including that great number who are certainly competent, generally teach what the system designs and dictates. When that design lags behind rapidly changing requirements of the society, students do not receive the skills and knowledge needed to become proficiently productive and contributing members of that society.

We have seen enormous change in this country since the 40s and society has become much more sophisticated. A person held in isolation for the past 40 years and dropped suddenly into the complexities of life in 1986 would not even recognize the terrain and could not be expected to deal with our current requirements. Knowing that is basic to an understanding of how we got where we are. This nation is no longer heavily rural or agricultural. Many of our manufacturing and heavy fabrication industries have changed remarkably and/or have faded from the scene. The society is highly mobile and very few of us get through life on the basis of one set of skills or on one assimilation of static knowledge. The economy and the job market have become clearly national forces and, as such, they necessitate mobility on the part of those of us who pursue career involvement and success. For such a system to succeed, a graduate of the educational system in any corner of this nation who, as a result of his/her application , attention, and successful completion of a required course of study is deemed and certified proficient, should have every right to expect that preparation to serve reliably no matter where relocation may lead. Such is too often not the case. Not only do we find that prescribed preparation to be so often irrelevant and dated; we so often find its level of quality seriously inconsistent. These conditions, and others, have brought us to the sorry state revealed by APL's national research over a decade ago.

Where are we today? To approach that answer, we must begin with a review of APL's earlier findings that fewer than one-half (46.3%) of American adults were clearly proficient, and that the remaining pool of "non" and "marginal" literates represented at that time some 60 million persons, a devastating condition for a nation rhetorically committed to a future of technological supremecy. Did any part of that finding indicate that there may already have been a weakness in our basic educational system? Consider the following facts: Of those persons determined to be functionally illiterate, 11% were high school graduates, 9% had completed some college, and 2% had at least one college degree. Additionally, of the segment of the population found to function only marginally or below, 37% had completed high school, 27% had some college, and 17% had at least one degree. Most action taken during this past decade has centered around remediation and those efforts, no matter how well intentioned, appear to have produced an infinitesimal result. Such federal efforts have been woefully small and critically underfunded adn that situation has deteriorated until, today, the best we appear able to get out of Washington is a rather simplistic approach based on volunteerism and no funding. While there has been lip service, there has not been the federal mandate and leadership, the national commitment, or the level of funding required to address this national disgrace. Our best evidence indicates that the number of incompetent and marginally functional persons in the United States today unable to share fully in the benefits of this society and certainly unable to contribute to it has surpassed seventy million. Each year, additional millions join that hapless pool. The ranks of those unable to function adequately swell each year by at least 400,000 legal immigrants, 100,000 refuges, at least 800,000 illegal immigrants, 850,000 school dropouts, and by an additional 150,000 who are pushed out primarily for the comfort and convenience of the educational system. Add to these the several hundred thousand high school graduates each year who are found to be illiterate to a degree that renders them unable to function above a bare survival level.

We know of no way to assess adequately the cost in terms of human suffering, shattered dreams, and unfulfilled potential. The cost in dollar loss to the society is somewhat more calculable. In terms of GNP, the well-educated estimated annual loss is set at $237 billion. In addition, an "immediate" annual cost to government and taxpayers is estimated at $20 billion. Welfare payments to those who are on the rolls because of a remediable deficiency are calculated to be at least $6 billion a year, and there is at least $6.6 billion annual cost associated with the incarceration of the three-quarters of a million inmates whose imprisonment has been linked directly to functional illiteracy. Whatever the numbers, they are too high. And whatever the cost of meaningful action, it is manageable when compared to the staggering, unfathomable price exacted by continued inaction. Many teachers are now incompetent or marginally competent at best. A great many parents are now incapable of determining whether their children are exposed to quality instruction or if their school tax money is buying only custodial care. Far too many traditionalists within the educational cadre find change too threatening to contemplate and persist instead in application of the 'tried and true' methods they first learned perhaps decades ago.

Functional incompetence in the United States has attained proportions of a national disgrace. Productivity falters to a point where foreign competition threatens to dominate our commerce. Our societal and political institutions are in a state of decline. Our military establishment suffers from a lack of competent enlistees and capable administration, and for that generation of youth currently enrolled in our educational system, mediocrity is rapidly becoming the norm.

What is desperately needed is a national policy statement on functional literacy. To some degree, at least, we have addressed equality of opportunity; we have said that we all should be free from any stigma associated with race, ethnicity, sex, and age. But we have not embraced a national mandate freeing our fellows from the grinding burden of illiteracy. The ability of the individual to contribute meaningfully to the development of this society and to participate fully and equally in its benefits has been the basic building block of America. That inherent element of self-determination, achievement, and liberty should not be entrusted to the caprice of any transient administration. Rather, it should be a clearly ennunciated and universally nurtured tenet of this democratic society.

We cannot ignore the fact that the United States is engaged in a war of technology. in order to succeed, we need the positive, productive input of all our citizens. In addition, each citizen deserves an opportunity to attain the level of proficiency which enables competent, effective representation in job access and career development, in consummerism, in appropriate utilization of community resources, and in understanding and supporting the requirement of our laws and government. It is unrealistic to expect that all our citizens will become full contributors to this society. It is paramount, however, that each citizen be allowed the dignity of that opportunity. It has been said that the attainment of excellence is an individual matter, but that it is the responsibility of society to see that barriers are removed. The demonstrated functional incompetence of half our adult population constitutes a clear and critical barrier to the fuller advancement of this society. Until we develop and embrace a positive, coherent policy dealing with the 'right' of our citizens to expect institutional systems capable of enabling each of us to attain acceptable functional competence, we will not begin to succeed. To have the capacity for bringing each of us to acceptable levels of performance, systems charged with that responsibility must themselves have clearly ennunciated, consistently enforced standards of performance, and ones which bear clear relevance to the dynamic needs of this society.

Surely the Congress understands its responsibility in this pressing need. There will never be a better time to address the problem. Given continued delay, there may never be time at all.

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity, and the privilege, to offer this testimony for your consideration.

Jim C. Cates, Director
Adult Performance Level Project
The University of Texas At Austin

Austin, Texas
March 13, 1986

DRAKE UNIVERSITY
DES MOINES, IOWA 50311

School of Journalism
and Mass Communication

MAR 21 1986

March 14, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Elementary, Secondary and
Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. Hawkins:

I am writing to express support for the National Commission on Illiteracy Act proposed by Senator Edward Zorinsky and 28 co-sponsors. Consequently, I request that this letter be included in the record of the illiteracy hearing scheduled for March 20.

Perhaps the most haunting comment I have heard in the past year is one from Jonathan Kozol: "When it comes to statistics on illiteracy, the United States is a Third World Nation."

Kozol might be identified as an advocate of literacy, if that weren't such an odd way to identify someone. Who isn't an advocate of literacy? Well, given the scandalous illiteracy rates in the nation, there must be a number of people who oppose literacy through their inaction, insensitivity or lack of awareness.

The proposal for a National Commission on Illiteracy is a small, but needed step toward resolving the social and economic problems resulting from illiteracy. I urge your committee to support this measure and related legislation.

Thank you for your attention and concern.

Sincerely,

Herbert Strentz, dean

cc: Senator Zorinsky

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

OFFICE OF THE DEAN
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

March 18, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary,
and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Hawkins:

This letter is being written to become part of the record of the illiteracy hearing on March 20, 1986. I write in support of the spirit of the National Commission on Illiteracy Act.

The notion of the prevention of illiteracy has much merit. To focus upon the causation of illiteracy may help us define the specific antecedents of this debilitating social, economic, and educational problem. Only through the identification of illiteracy's cause or causes will we be able to take preventive measures.

Psychologists, as far back as Edward L. Thorndike, realized that the first educational event was the most important. If this event was positive and appropriate, future success resulted. This initial success sets the stage for subsequent, positive development. When initial experiences are negative and/or inappropriate failure results. Remediation must then be employed. Remediation is no positive cure, it is expensive, it is time consuming, and it is negative socially and emotionally.

The spirit of the National Commission on Illiteracy Act accepts and embraces the importance of the initial, educational event. Further, it seeks to identify and define the causes of illiteracy. No cure can be rendered until such time as the illness is diagnosed and defined. Logically it, the Act, proceeds to the next step; that of identifying appropriate methods for children who manifest pre-illiteracy conditions. This approach impresses me as being correct and offers hope for the eradication of our Nation's illiteracy problem.

I hope you and the Subcommittee will see fit to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

James O. Schnur

James O. Schnur
Dean

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WAKE FOREST

The Bowman Gray
School of Medicine

Department of Neurology
Section of Neuropsychology
(919) 748-2261

March 27, 1986

Honarable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and
Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B, 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Hawkins,

I would like for this letter to be included in the record of the illiteracy hearing to be held by your subcommittee on March 20, 1986. As a person trained in general elementary education as well as in special education (learning disabilities), I have become increasingly aware of the shortcomings of my training in the area of teaching reading. During the late sixties and early seventies, I taught young children with a range of abilities and found myself faced with the inadequacy of both traditional (i.e. basal readers) and the then popular (i.e. perceptual-motor deficit) models of "special education" for learning disabled children. In my search for ways to teach young, "hard-to-teach" children to read, I became convinced of the relative efficacy of the phonics as compared to the whole word approach. After moving to Winston-Salem, NC, I was fortunate enough to be introduced to June Orton and her knowledge concerning various ways of teaching phonics. I learned to appreciate the vast differences between what passes for phonics instruction in many basal texts and what constitutes a careful, systematic phonics approach.

Out of my early teaching experiences, I developed a strong interest in learning more about ways to teach young children that would prevent or ameliorate subsequent reading disabilities. In pursuit of this goal, I completed doctoral training in child development and learning disabilities and am currently on the faculty of the Neurology Department of Bowman Gray School of Medicine. At Bowman Gray my colleagues and I are actively involved in research with reading disabled children. We have recently completed a study of the brain bases of reading disabilities (sponsored by NICHD and NINCDS) and have other applications under review. As part of the preparation for applications in this field, I have reviewed current research on the prediction of reading disability as well as teaching methods. My conclusions have been that we know a great deal about how to predict reading failure as well as how to teach beginning reading. Unfortunately, very little of the existing knowledge has been put into practice. In addition, much more research into the interaction between type of specific reading disability and teaching methods appropriate for the truly reading disabled

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is vital. One of the problems inherent in such research is that the identification of reading disabled or dyslexic children is clouded by the interaction between teaching methods and reading problems. As researchers, we are faced with the problem of trying to determine how much of a child's reading disability is due to some brain based deficit and how much is due to poor or inappropriate teaching. Research that starts with the idea of preventing future reading disabilities is in my opinion, the only way to resolve this issue.

In conclusion, I strongly recommend that you and your committee support S.J. Res. 138 which would establish a National Commission on Illiteracy.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Felton
Rebecca Felton, Ph.D.
Section of Neuropsychology
Department of Neurology
Bowman Gray School of Medicine

cc. Senator Edward Zorinsky
Congressman Steve Neal
Senator Jesse Helms
Senator John East
Governor James Martin

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
OSHKOSH

March 18, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and
Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B, 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Hawkins:

It is my request that the following statement be included in the record of the "Illiteracy Hearing" on March 20, 1986.

My Statement:

> I, Robert T. Nash, Professor of Special Education at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, want to go on record in support of Senator Zorinsky's proposed 'bill' that is designed to identify the causes of illiteracy in the United States and to also identify the most efficient method of instruction to teach Reading and Spelling in order to obviate the occurrence in the United States.

The importance of your committees support of this bill cannot be overstressed. Why, because today our national professional teacher training educational institutions just have not been collectively efficient in advocating what is the most efficient way to teach reading and spelling to those who do not respond to traditional and/or conventional procedures for teaching reading. That efficient "way" is known as "the direct instruction of phonics" to all beginning kindergarten and 1st Grade students in the entire United States of America.

Because of this instructional inefficiency on the part of our colleges and universities we have in the United States a body of 25 to 73 million people (both rich and poor) who qualify under one or more of these labels: Illiterate, Functionally Illiterate, Learning Disabled, or Dyslexic.

Large elements of this 25 to 73 million language handicapped people are in our Armed Forces, in our Correctional Institutions, and on our list of the Chronically Unemployed and generally dispersed throughout all of the levels of our society.

One of the significant subsequent benefits of an inactment of Senator Lorinsky's 'bill' would be the future savings in tax revenue, revenue which is now being negatively dissipate in at least 4 ways:

PROJECT SUCCESS • COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH • OSHKOSH WISCONSIN 54901 • (414) 424-1033

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AFFIRMATIVE ACTION INSTITUTION

a) Federal support for the training and hiring of Special Education Learning Disability teachers who are themselves inefficient for reasons already cited, and

b) State and Federal Support for inefficient instruction of Incarcerated Inmates, to Clients of Vocational Rehabilitation Service, and to beneficiaries of other State and Federal Job Retaining efforts, and

c) To recipients of Federal Welfare, and

d) To recipients of Unemployment Compensation .

If I can be of any further service to you and the members of your committee in evaluating the merits of Senator Zorensky's 'bill' then all you have to do is to say so. I am willing , if my personal presence would help, to come to Washington, D.C. at my own expense to support the successful implementation of this bill and its intended goals.

I will add just one further note, for the last 7 years all of my professional energies have been spent in remediating the reading and spelling deficits of individuals who can come under any one of the aforementioned labels.

Sincerely yours,

Robert T. Nash

Robert T. Nash, Ed.D.
Professor & Director, Project Success

RTN:djw

The
American
Legion

For God and Country

★ WASHINGTON OFFICE ★ 1608 "K" STREET, N.W. ★ WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006 ★
(202) 861-2700 ★

March 27, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
House Education & Labor Subcommittee on
Elementary, Secondary and Vocational
Education
B-346C Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hawkins:

The American Legion, as an organization committed to the welfare of young people, is deeply concerned about the high rates of illiteracy that continue to plague our schools, even in light of extensive outlays of funds for remedial efforts.

Recent studies indicate a disturbingly high rate of functional illiteracy with some 23 million American adults unable to perform in the simplest tests of everyday reading, writing and comprehension. The report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education entitled "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform" indicates that approximately 13 percent of all 17 years-olds in the U.S. are functionally illiterate with minority youth approaching a shocking 40 percent in the same category. Indications are that, despite expenditures of millions of dollars in remedial training by the government and the private sector, the illiteracy rate shows few signs of receding. We believe the debate over what should be done to address the enormous illiteracy rate in this country should be shifted from an emphasis on remedial needs to a focus on why children are not becoming proficient in reading in the first place.

The American Legion supports the bipartisan initiative by Senator Zorinsky to establish a national commission on illiteracy. This legislation, Senate Joint Resolution 102, would establish a commission to conduct a full and complete study of the causes of illiteracy. The commission would be tasked with assessing the factors contributing to illiteracy while recommending programs and policies to prevent illiteracy; the appropriate governmental role in prevention; and an analysis and publication of its findings. We believe that the establishment of such a commission as stated in S.J. Res. 102 would go far in focusing upon the heart of the illiteracy problem; the cause of students' failure to achieve a proficiency in reading.

Mr. Chairman, The American Legion urges you and members of the House Committee on Education and Labor to support S.J. Res. 102. We request that a copy of this letter be made part of the hearing record for the March 20, 1986 hearing of the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education.

Thank you for your attention to the views of The American Legion.

Sincerely,

E. Philip Riggin, Director
National Legislative Commission

RUDOLF FLESCH
24 Belden Avenue
Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. 10522

(914) 693-5367

March 18, 1986

Hon. Augustus F. Hawkins
Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Hawkins,

Please include the following in the record of the illiteracy hearing on March 20th.

International statistics assume that anyone with at least four years of schooling is literate. Yet the U.S. has over 23 million illiterates even though we have had compulsory education for a hundred years. Why? Because our schools teach reading poorly: 90% use the whole-word or "look-and-say" method. It takes nine years (K-8) and produces learning disabilities up to total illiteracy. In contrast, phonics-first teaches independent reading in the first term of first grade.

These facts have been proved by 124 scientific studies since 1911. A 1984 survey by the National Assessment of Educational Progress found that 61% of our high school graduates can't read well enough for college study or for a better-than-menial job. Faced with reading matter of more than a hundred words, they look for familiar words and skip or guess the rest.

In its 1986 booklet "What Works" the U.S. Department of Education says, "At home, half of all fifth graders spend only 4 minutes a day reading." If they had been taught phonics-first, they would read more.

Respectfully yours,
Rudolf Flesch
Rudolf Flesch
author of "Why Johnny Can't Read" (1955)
and "Why Johnny Still Can't Read" (1981)

POUDRE SCHOOL DISTRICT R-1

FORT COLLINS HIGH SCHOOL
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March 17, 1986

The Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Hawkins:

Will you please include the following in the record of your illiteracy hearing on March 20?

Over 50 years ago the sight-word system of learning to read was developed for hearing-impaired children. In typical educational fashion, this new system was touted as innovative for all children and, in the style of educators, without any research it became "far superior" to beginning reading with phonics.

For 50 years the debate over beginning reading has raged. In 1965, the International Reading Association commissioned Jean Chall el al to review all of 60 years research. When Dr. Chall reported the Commission's findings that beginning reading with phonics was the most successful, the "powers" of the IRA denigrated the report because they did not agree with it. Many were on paid editorial boards of "non-phonic" basal publishing companies.

The latest ten-year study at the University of Illinois, funded by NIE, is by far the most comprehensive study in that researchers were from many reading-related disciplines. Hundreds of children were studied during this period of research, and the report was meticulously reviewed by all those involved. This report, "Becoming a Nation of Readers," has reaffirmed the importance of phonics in the beginning to read process. Again, the IRA has belittled this facet of the report.

3/17/86 Illiteracy Hearing (page 2)

As a teacher of reading K-12, for 20 years, and now teaching spelling in high school, I am more convinced than ever that beginning phonics is absolutely essential. I have senior students whose SAT verbal test scores are frightening. Nearly every one of those students who cannot spell, also cannot sound out words and are poor readers. They are skilled in guessing meaning with context clues because they are intelligent, but lack basic decoding skills.

Is not fifty years of poor reading and spelling skills proof enough that we need to at least try "the other system"--phonics--nationwide?

As it is, we have put billions into remediation and nothing into the cause. The teaching of beginning reading with phonics first is a specialized skill so there would need to be a huge staff-development program. But we have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

I also would like your committee to support Ed Zorinsky's bill to establish a National Commission on Illiteracy. We must do something. We have the research; we only need action.

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard; I hope legislators are listening.

Sincerely,

Winnette Payne

Winnette Payne
Teacher of Spelling and English

WP/pv

c Edward Zorinsky

PIKES PEAK COMMUNITY COLLEGE
5675 South Academy Boulevard • Colorado Springs, CO 80906 5498 • (303) 576 7711
Developmental Studies, Box 14

March 18, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins,
Chairman, Subcommittee on Elementary,
Secondary, and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Sir:

I teach in a Developmental Studies program at Pikes Peak Community College, in Colorado Springs, as a reading instructor. We test most of our incoming students in reading, English and math. Those who do not have the competencies to take classes in their particular programs are required to take our courses in math, English, reading, and spelling. We serve about 13% of our student population. Eighty percent of the students who read at junior high level or below have psychological problems in reading, generally due to failing a grade or some traumatic experience. I am dealing with students who have not been in elementary school for 12 to 30 years, but the psychological trauma is still there. Self esteem in these students is low.

I always try to remove the burden of guilt the students carry by stating that, "no six year old child is in charge; the system fails and some fall through the cracks." Many, however, ask why the system fails and what to do to prevent such cases as theirs from happening.

MY ANSWERS:

1. Parents have a responsibility to help teach their children but where in the public school system do we find such courses? Where is the wide spread effort to teach parents how to help their children become better students-the delivery system is already in place-the public school system, the PTA organization, etc....

2. When a child shows that he/she has a reading problem, help should be available immediately in every school regardless of the economic situation and such help should be continued as long as it is needed.

3. Secondary schools cannot ignore reading training--every student with average capacity or above should be able to use several approaches to reading, to vary rate of comprehension to purpose. Most average or above average students should read everyday materials at 500-800 wpm with good comprehension. The average high school student today reads at 250 wpm. The average college student at 350 wpm. SCANDALOUS.

4. Every child should be surrounded with books, magazines and newspapers at home if possible and certainly at school. Everyday in every school, story hours should be available.

5. There are excellent reading teachers all over this nation of ours; teachers who can teach other teachers, who can be examples and again the delivery system is in place (the public schools.) -- utilize what is now in place.

These are only a few of my observations from forty years of helping people inprove their reading skills. I am certain the reading experts of the nation have many other suggestions!

Sincerely,

Dr. Elizabeth H. Gibson

Dr. Elizabeth H. Gibson,
Reading Instructor
Developmental Studies
Pikes Peak Community College

cc/ Senator Edward Zorinsky
United States Senate
443 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

NOTE: I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THIS LETTER INCLUDED IN THE THE RECORD OF THE ILLITERACY HEARING ON MARCH 20.

GERALDINE E. RODGERS
419 STUYVESANT AVENUE
LYNDHURST, NEW JERSEY 07071
(201) 438-2044

March 10, 1986

The Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education
House of Representatives
Rayburn Building - Room B 364 C
Washington, D. C. 20515

Sir:

Your support, and the support of your committee, for Senator Zorinsky's bill, The National Commission on Illiteracy Act, would be most appreciated

Concerning the March 20 hearing of your subcommittee on illiteracy, I am enclosing my written testimony, which I will appreciate your including in the written record on the hearing.

I am also sending a copy of this material to Senator Zorinsky.

Very truly yours,

Geraldine E. Rodgers

Geraldine E. Rodgers

Encl.

cc (with enclosure): The Honorable Edward Zorinsky
United States Senate
443 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D. C. 20510

PHONICS FIRST

Talk Given at the Eagle Forum on September 21, 1985
Washington, D. C.
By Geraldine E. Rodgers

The Kurzweil Reading Machine "reads" books for the blind, turning print into a human voice. We are born with what amounts to a Kurzweil Reading Machine in our heads. It just has to be programmed to read print by learning letter sounds.

Dr. Wilder Penfield, a neurosurgeon, said the conscious activity of the mind goes from the higher brain stem up into parts of the two sides of the brain. He called this conscious part of the brain the "higher brain mechanism." Running from the brain stem up into other parts of the two sides of the brain is another system he called the brain's computer. A kind of switch in the brain stem connects our minds with our computers. We can decide to turn the switch on or off, listen to what our computers are doing, change their behaviors, or ignore them, in which case the computers carry on an activity as we think about something else.

Dr. Hilde Mosse, the pediatrician/psychiatrist, said most of our daily actions, once learned, are handled by our brains' computers. Nothing is ever learned without paying conscious attention to it WHILE being learned. Once learned, it can be done automatically, while we think of other things. These actions include walking, talking, tying shoelaces, typing, and many more, including READING. Reading problems can come from not being able to form necessary conditioned reflexes so our computers can do decoding automatically, or by establishing and practicing wrong reflexes, according to Dr. Mosse.

She said the "set" on meaning should not be interrupted when reading, as we learn how to turn print to sound. Our brains' computers should function like the Kurzweil machine, automatically. Our minds should be totally filled with the ideas on the page for maximum reading comprehension. A reader who starts to think about decoding in reading is like a walker who starts to stare at his feet. Like the walker, the reader will stumble.

It is, therefore, almost UNBELIEVABLE that the method for teaching reading in most American first grades forces children to focus PERMANENT, CONSCIOUS attention on decoding itself. Such reading mimics the activity of a partly deaf person when straining to catch a conversation: using only the FEW sounds he hears and the context of the conversation, he CONSCIOUSLY GUESSES at missing words. THAT is what basal reader phonics REALLY is: teaching children to use only a FEW letter sounds consciously to GUESS at a missing word from the context of the memorized sight words they can already read. By contrast, true phonics programs teach most children by January of first grade to form reliable conditioned reflexes between all 44 phonemes in English as they occur in syllables. More practice is needed after January to develop these skills to automaticity, but eventually their brains' computers operate just like the Kurzweil machine. If their conscious minds choose to listen (remember: their mind's attention is free) they will have MAXIMUM comprehension, with NO guessing.

The Japanese do not use our alphabet. They use Kanji picture characters and Kana syllable characters. Some Japanese stroke patients can read ONLY the Kanji picture characters while others can read ONLY the Kana syllable characters. Memories of different kinds of print are obviously stored in different parts of the brain.

In 1890, William James wrote of what was common knowledge then from autopsies on stroke patients who had lost the ability to read. Alphabetic sound-bearing print was stored on the left side of the brain in the angular gyrus region.

All the evidence points to the fact that conditioned reflexes are established to the left angular gyrus area for print read as sound but to the right angular gyrus area for print read as pictures or sight words.

Today work is being done on the brain in which living people are observed as they read. Americans today, who learned with sight-words and phony phonics, can read alphabetic print with BOTH sides of the brain, unlike William James' classical stroke patients. So the ultimate effect of reading by sight words, some FEW letter sounds and context guessing is mixed dominance, using memory banks on BOTH sides of the brain on the same stimulus. Mixed dominance is very undesirable. To use Samuel Blumenfeld's term, we are jamming the reflexes in children's brains.

Something else interferes with automatic reading. First-graders need two fixations to see a sight-word, but Japanese characters need only one fixation. How can a child read a sight word "all at once" with the right brain which sees things "all at once" when he can see only the first half of the word all at once? By conscious guessing, of course.

Two hundred fifty of the highest frequency words are three-quarters of words in children's books. When children know them and how to guess from a few letter sounds, the damage is hidden till they leave controlled vocabulary for harder books where guessing does not work since they never heard the new words. Texts today THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL are dumbed down since most children cannot really read. So they never learn the vocabulary and syntax of Western Civilization's literature. THIS is the reason the SAT scores are dropping.

Geraldine E. Rodgers
419 Stuyvesant Avenue
Lyndhurst, New Jersey 07071

PRESENTATION GIVEN AT CHRISTIAN [illegible]
BAPTIST CATHEDRAL, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 9, [illegible]

WHY SING, SPELL READ & WRITE IS THE CORRECT [illegible] FOR TEACHING CHILDREN [illegible]
By Geraldine E. [illegible] ©September 9, 1985

For the past twelve years, I have had the good fortune to be using Sing, Spell, Read and Write, but the MISFORTUNE to have to use it only as a supplemental reading program in the school system in which I teach. I used Sing, Spell, Read and Write to overcome the damage done by the basal sight-word readers, those programs Dr. Rudolf Flesch has rightly named "The Dismal Dozen." I have usud it for remediation at second and third grades and as supplemental material at first grade. It works; it really works. Why it works is something of a mystery to the outsider, because even the Dismal Dozen all claim to use good, solid phonics. So, what is the difference between GOOD phonics and BAD phonics? I will talk about what separates them.

In 1977-1978, I took a six months' sabbatical leave and tested the oral reading accuracy, relative speed, reversals, and reading comprehension of about 900 second graders, in this country and in Luxembourg, Holland, Sweden, Germany, Austria and France. My results showed that we were developing different kinds of readers, based on the programs used in first grade. Real phonics programs like Sing, Spell, Read and Write, both here and in Europe, developed very accurate, fast readers, who were capable of excellent reading comprehension. Programs which did not teach real phonics produced readers who made many errors, read slowly, made many reversals, and were not capable of reading with high comprehension.

My data was sent to "reading experts," almost all of whom never replied, and I began to dig in the literature for the reason for the rejection of my flat proof that real phonics works best, here and in Euorpe. For the past seven years, I have been digging in libraries and in historical material. I will talk of the conclusions I have made, one of which is that we have institutionalized reading failure in this country, and most "reading experts" have a vested interest in that sinking ship. They are not interested in the water pouring in through the holes in their ship, or in the fact that the Soviet Union, which teaches real phonics, has no reading problem.

Concerning my conclusions: to read alphabetic print properly means to hear the printed page as well as we hear the human voice. The Kurzweil Reading Machine is a remarkable invention. It "reads" books for the blind, turning print into a human voice. Even more remarkable is that we are, almost all of us, born with what amounts to a Kurzweil Reading Machine inside our heads. Our brains just have to be programmed to read print the way the Kurzweil machine does, which is, of course, by learning the sounds of printed letters, or phonics.

Our brains are a remarkable gift of God, like two-way sending and receiving radio sets, with a computer inside. The evidence indicates that one side of our brain deals, for the most part, with space, and the other side deals with material, for the most part, that concerns time. It is fascinating that our brains appear to be divided, more or less, so that our minds can deal with the two aspects of the material world: space and time. With the use of our brains, our minds therefore can interact and deal with the material world, and our bodies can carry out the orders given to them by our minds.

Dr. Wilder Penfield, the famous neurosurgeon who died not long ago, a religious man, wrote The Mystery of the Mind. After many years of operating on human brains, he came to believe that the mind is first observable at what is called the higher brain stem deep inside the brain. The activity of the mind travels from the higher brain stem up into parts of the two sides of the brain. Dr. Penfield called this conscious part of the brain the "higher brain mechanism." But also running from the brain stem up into the other parts of the two sides of the brain is another system which he called the brain's computer (its automatic sensory motor mechanism.) Dr. Penfield told of a kind of switch deep inside the brain which connects our conscious mind with our brain's computer. A person can decide to turn the switch on or off, which is to say, to listen to what his computer is doing, to alter its behavior, or to ignore it, in which case the computer can carry on an activity while the person is thinking about something else.

Dr. Hilde Mosse, the pediatrician/psychiatrist, wrote The Complete Handbook of Children's Reading Disorders (ignored by our "reading experts" and never mentioned in the much talked of U. S. Government report, Becoming a Nation of Readers, which was written by "reading experts.") Dr. Mosse said most of our ordinary daily actions are handled by our brain's computer, once we have learned them, which is to say, once they have been "conditioned." Nothing is ever learned or conditioned without paying conscious attention to it WHILE it is being learned. AFTER it is learned, it can be done automatically. While we had to pay conscious attention to an activity while it was being learned, once it is "conditioned," we can then think about other things while our computer handles the work. These activities, to which we once had to pay conscious attention and which now should be done automatically, include walking, talking, tying shoelaces, typing, and many, many more, including, significantly, READING. Dr. Mosse said reading problems can come from not being able to form the necessary conditioned reflexes so that our computers can do the work automatically, or by establishing and practicing wrong reflexes. Another term she used for wrong reflexes was "an impairment of automatic mechanisms."

Let us consider what an impairment of automatic mechanisms might mean in other daily activities besides reading. One which is most obvious is talking. When this is not automatic, the result is stuttering. Consider what happens with something else, as simple as brushing your teeth. If you picked up your toothbrush in the morning and had to study consciously in which direction to move the toothbrush to get it inside your mouth, and then, when it was finally inside your mouth, you had to decide carefully whether to brush back and forth or up and down, and if you had to study the cap on your toothpaste tube and then consciously decide whether to turn it clockwise or counterclockwise to get it off, you would be suffering from an impairment of automatic mechanisms. Almost nobody thinks about these things except a baby learning to do them, and we laugh at its little awkwardnesses.

We are enchanted with a baby's fumbling, bumbling first steps while he is learning (conditioning) the automatic activity of walking. But, if we concentrate consciously on our steps the way the baby does, we will not only be impairing our automatic mechanism (which he does not yet have), but we will most likely fall on our faces. Our minds should be free, when walking, to think about WHERE we are going, and not HOW we are going to move our bodies in that direction.

So it is with reading. Dr. Mosse said the "set" on meaning should not be interrupted when reading, once we have learned how to read. Our minds should be totally occupied with the ideas on the page, if we are going to read with maximum reading comprehension. Once the reader starts thinking about the act of reading itself, he is like the walker who starts to stare at his feet, and, like the walker, he will fall flat on his face. He will stumble or stammer.

We actually have statistical proof that present-day readers, trained in the phony phonics of the basal readers, are stumbling more when reading than in times gone past. Studies of eye movements while reading for modern readers show them making far more regressions than in years past, where the eye goes back to look at print it has already seen. Regressions in reading are like stuttering when speaking. This has happened because the sight-word basal reader, phony phonics deliberately interferes with the formation of true, automatic conditioned reflexes in reading, and makes it necessary for the reader ALWAYS, so to speak, to watch his feet. No wonder they develop problem readers! They are like people who are hard of hearing, and who have great trouble following conversations because of all the words they miss. Hard-of-hearing people have to guess the missing words from the context of the conversation. Listening, of course, should be as automatic an activity as talking, but for these poor people whose hearing has deteriorated, it is no longer automatic. It is, therefore, almost UNBELIEVABLE that the method for teaching reading in most American schools, which claim to use phonics, is based on the same kind of activity that a partially deaf person goes through when straining to catch a conversation: using only the few sounds he has heard, and the context of the conversation, he CONSCIOUSLY GUESSES at the missing words. That is what basal reader "phonics" is: using only a few letter sounds consciously to GUESS at a missing word, the way a partly deaf person does. By contrast, Sing, Spell, Read and Write phonics means to form a totally reliable, AUTOMATIC conditioned reflex between all the 44 phonemes in English, as they occur in syllables, so that when the eyes travel across the page, the brain's computer automatically produces a flawless internal voice speaking the print, just like the Kurzweil reading machine. If the conscious mind chooses to listen to the product that the computer is producing so flawlessly (remember: the mind's attention is free), the conscious mind will have MAXIMUM reading comprehension, with NO guessing. How can ANYONE want readers to GUESS print instead of to HEAR it? Yet the fact is that most reading experts are on the side of consciously guessing! Obviously, the readers they produce can never read automatically.

English has perhaps half a million words, all of which must be read by syllables, as the ancient Greeks and Romans read them. Instead of teaching syllables, sight-word basal readers teach high-frequency words. Since only 100 words make half of anything in print, and since 250 of the highest-frequency words are three-quarters of the words in children's books, the damage the basal readers do is hidden for the majority of children until they get into harder books (as in high school), where guessing unknown words from letter sounds simply does not work, because the children never heard these harder words. Children should be taught SYLLABLES, not WORDS, just as was done by the ancient Etruscans about 600 B. C., by the ancient Greeks and Romans, and by all of Europe until the 19th century. When phonics students meet difficult words in the upper grades, they sound them out so that they can say them, and figure out the meaning from the material they are reading. So they learn the language of books the same way they learned the spoken language, from hearing the words and figuring out what the words meant from the conversation (context). But the little basal reader guessers cannot hear the words, and so they never learn the language of real literature. This is the reason the SAT scores are dropping.

As I told Sue Dickson once, the author of *Sing, Spell, Read and Write*, I enjoy the fact that her "ferris wheel" song (which my first graders have always loved) is really practicing syllables very like those taught in ancient Greece. H. I. Marrou of France said there is evidence that ancient Greek children sung the alphabet, and he told of the elaborate syllabary, a 300 B. C. teachers' guide dug out of the sands in North Africa, with ferris-wheel type syllables on it! I suspect those ancient Greek children sang not just the letters but the syllables, very much as Sue Dickson has her 20th century children do with the ferris wheel song, which they love so much. Years ago, my principal used to walk down the hall to stand outside the door, to hear the children go through this exercise, as they were enjoying it so much and it sounded so nice.

The ultimate aim of first-grade reading should be to teach children to form correct conditioned reflexes between printed phonemes and their sounds, and between the printed syllables built from them and their sounds. *Sing, Spell, Read and Write* includes 17 little story books with totally uncontrolled vocabulary, giving the necessary heavy practice on printed syllable-to-sound correspondence, on which proper, automatic conditioned reflexes are based. They provide quite a contrast to the controlled-vocabulary, phony phonics, "guessing" basal readers in most schools today.

Our public schools have been making children partially deaf when faced with print since at least 1930, making it IMPOSSIBLE for students to read automatically, and therefore sharply lowering their "reading comprehension." In almost all American schools, the children are actually DRILLED in guessing, like the hard-of-hearing. So, while experts are destroying the ability to read with a complete concentration on meaning, which means to read completely automatically, they have the gall to say they are teaching for "meaning.!"

But, teaching children to guess at print, instead of to sound it out as *Sing, Spell, Read and Write* does, is not ALL the reading experts have been doing.

To understand a particularly vicious effect of the sight-word, phony phonics basal readers, we have to jump over to Japan and watch how they handle print. The Japanese do not use our alphabet. Instead, they have Chinese characters (which are pictures with meanings) and also symbols of their own which stand just for syllable sounds (like fe, fi, fo, fum, in the nursery rhyme.) The best way to get the effect of reading Japanese is to read the sentence we all know: I ♡ New York. The picture of the heart is like the Chinese characters, or like that part of the Japanese writing called Kanji. We read the picture for its MEANING. It has no sound. The rest of the sentence is made of letters which have sound, so they are like the syllable part of the Japanese writing, the Kana.

Some Japanese stroke patients, who have had brain damage, can read ONLY the Kanji picture characters, while some other Japanese stroke patients can read ONLY the Kana syllable characters. It is obvious they are storing the memories of the different kinds of print in different parts of the brain. Since spatial pictures are handled by the right side of the brain, it is not surprising to read that Kanji is considered to be "decoded" by the right brain. Since sound, which is a timed activity, is handled, in its speech aspects, by the left side of the brain, it is to be expected that Kana characters would be stored on the left side of the brain.

Back in 1890, the famous psychologist William James wrote of what was common knowledge at that time concerning where alphabetic print was stored in the brain: unquestionably, on the left side, the side that was known to control speech. Some stroke patients in this country and in Europe had lost the ability to read print. When autopsies were done on these poor people, it was found they had damage in a part of the left brain known as the Angular gyrus region, called also Brodmann's Area 39. Dr. Mosse said the same kinds of regions appear on both sides of the brain, so it may be assumed that the Japanese Kanji pictures are stored in the RIGHT angular gyrus, Brodmann's 39 region, which should deal with print SPATIALLY, instead of on a sequential SOUND, or timed, basis. James and all the other nineteenth century psychologists were not surprised that alphabetic print memories were stored on the left side of the brain, because they knew language was handled there.

So, as James and other psychologists reported before 1890, stroke patients who had damage in the area of the left angular gyrus lost ALL ability to read print, unlike the Japanese who lose either the sound or the picture portion. That was because, at that time, printed word memories were stored in alphabetic languages ONLY in the area of the left angular gyrus. People who learned to read alphabetic print used ONLY the memory banks on the left side of the brain, the sound side. There was no reason to use the PICTURE side to read print based on SOUND.

Today, work is being done on the functions of the brain, with new techniques, so that its actions can be seen in living people, as well as observed by autopsies on those who have died. These new techniques, today, show that people reading alphabetic print in America are reading with BOTH sides of the brain, unlike the earlier stroke patients reported by James and others. So here is the ultimate effect of teaching children to read by sight-words (print considered like pictures), some few letter sounds, and context guessing. Children are being drilled to use BOTH memory banks in the brain: the "picture" and the "sound" one. As might be expected, the brain research today shows readers are storing printed memories on BOTH sides of the brain.

That is not a good thing, like using two eyes, or two hands. To perform an activity like reading, dominance should be established for picture print SOLELY to the right, and for sound-bearing print SOLELY to the left. Mixed dominance on such activities is very undesirable. For instance, it can be one of the causes of stuttering, when speech is on both sides of the brain. Drilling children to look at words as picture forms (sight-words) and, AT THE SAME TIME, as letter-sounds (by guessing from a few letters) is a direct cause of mixed dominance, in my opinion, and means that we are jamming the reflexes in our children's brains. That, by itself, should cause conscious context guessing, and make a true conditioned reflex an impossibility.

But something else interferes with forming an automatic conditioned reflex when alphabetic print is read like Chinese, by the right side of the brain, spatially, or "all at once." Little children at first grade require two fixations (movements of the eyes) to see ALL of a sight-word. Yet the right side of the brain does not operate sequentially. If the child is using that side of the brain, he "reads" the sight word "all-at-once," with the first fixation, before he has been able to see the whole word. How does he read the whole word when he can only see the first half? By guessing, of course. In *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, clear confirmation is given on page 11 that "reading experts" expect readers to start "guessing" a word as soon as they see its first few letters, and sight-word trained readers DO that, using consciousness and showing an impairment of automatic mechanisms, because they have been drilled to use the right side of the brain, the "all-at-once" side. But children who learn to read by TRUE phonics, like *Sing, Spell, Read and Write*, use the memory banks on the LEFT side of the brain, which operate sequentially. They do not make up their mind what a word is till they have seen ALL of it. They read it BY SOUND, automatically, and DO NOT GUESS.

But even the guessing is not the end of the sad story and all the reason for our terrible reading disabilities in this country. Reading is only the door into the tower of knowledge, to refer to a medieval picture drawn to show "learning." Once children know how to read, they can START to be educated. Marva Collins of Chicago, who teaches real phonics, has her third graders reading Chaucer, and her upper graders reading even heavier, REAL literature. It is no wonder her students' essays show incredible language ability: wonderful syntax, marvelous vocabulary. She has been feeding them wonderful syntax and marvelous vocabulary in the books she has them reading. Yet basal readers and most subject texts in our schools today are "dumbed down" so the children never have the chance to acquire the complex vocabulary and syntax of the literature of Western Civilization.

When all is said and done, perhaps the two best books for growth in syntax and vocabulary are those that Abraham Lincoln used as a child: Shakespeare and the Bible. The majestic language of his speeches was no accident, but he would never have developed it if he had been limited to comic books and TV like the 20th century children caught in the wilderness of inner-city schools, where the opportunity to learn has been destroyed by reading experts, because they have been wiring our poor little children's brains wrong.

Sing, Spell, Read and Write does justice to the little children. It not only provides all the essential training and practice necessary for forming permanent, automatic conditioned reflexes between print and sound, but it provides materials to arouse the children's interest. The children's attention is assured when their interest is aroused, and, without conscious attention on an activity or lesson, the activity or lesson can never be learned. Sing, Spell, Read and Write has the built-in child-delight that guarantees the interest which produces attention. Children love it, and what they love, they pay attention to, and what they pay attention to, they learn.

Sing, Spell, Read and Write is an extraordinarily effective reading program, and I know of no other like it. I am delighted that CBN and you are arranging to use it in your school.

Geraldine E. Rodgers
419 Stuyvesant Avenue
Lyndhurst, New Jersey 07071

(Talk given at Pilgrim Baptist Cathedral, 628 Central Avenue, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11207)

September 9, 1985

A COUNTER-REPORT

TO THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, THE HONORABLE WILLIAM J. BENNETT

ON THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON READING

BECOMING A NATION OF READERS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to make you aware of the necessity to withdraw *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, the report of the Commission on Reading (1985: NIE Contract No. 400-83-0057) and to appoint a new Commission on Reading, composed of knowledgeable laypersons, not "reading experts," to research the area properly and to issue a substitute, rational report. This Counter-report contains highly pertinent information - testimony, if you will - which is totally omitted from the background information of the report. The omission of such pertinent information might be attributed to intellectual sloth, but, whatever the cause, the area cannot be properly understood without it, and this information has no place in the "reading experts'" frame of reference. The "reading experts" have demonstrated conclusively that, as prisoners of their own peculiar frame of reference, they are incapable of seeing outside it.

Their report is an academic monstrosity, conceived in their own little bubble of the here-and-now, almost totally divorced from any true historical, comparative geographical or psychologically brain-linked basis for reading instruction, all of which are essential for understanding the subject. Because of their ignorance, they have missed the paramount fact: what are being taught in most American first grades today are not correct, automatic conditioned reflexes in reading, but the establishment and practice of wrong reflexes (to paraphrase Dr. Hilde Mosse, who wrote *The Complete Handbook of Children's Reading Disorders*, Human Sciences Press, Inc., New York, New York, 1982. As a physician and psychiatrist, Dr. Mosse knew what she was talking about - but the "experts" apparently never heard of her.)

My research in testing oral reading in this country and Europe in 1977-1978 and my library research for the seven years since then has determined that the real cause of our reading difficulties is the establishing of faulty conditioned reflexes at the very beginning of reading instruction, the critical initial three to six months when reflexes become ingrained for life. Faulty conditioned reflexes are being formed dominantly to the memory bank for *meaning*-bearing print in the *right angular gyrus* area of the brain, which is suitable only for print like Chinese characters. Chinese characters are "neat little squares," as Stella S. F. Liu described them, and can be perceived "all at once," or globally, which is how the right side of the brain functions, spatially. Correct conditioned reflexes are not being formed solely to the memory bank for *sound*-bearing print in the *left angular gyrus* area of the brain, which side of the brain functions sequentially, so it is suitable for our alphabetic system where words must be read as sequences of syllables, and not as meaning-bearing whole characters. Beginning readers require two visual fixations to see an alphabetic word of average length, so in no way can beginning readers see whole sight words all at once like Chinese characters. The result is that when children read printed alphabetic words with the right brain they are forced to guess - to resort to consciousness - which obviously makes the formation of an automatic conditioned reflex an impossibility. Beginning readers must be introduced to print as *sound*-bearing characters, not *meaning*-bearing characters, and must be taught to read print syllable by syllable, which is how the Ancients taught it, and how the whole Western World taught it up until almost the nineteenth century. It is how most Latin language countries still teach it, and, significantly, how the Soviets teach it, giving their children pointers to point at syllables THROUGH THIRD GRADE, and the Soviets, as we all know, have virtually no reading problem, while our problems with the meaning-bearing whole-word approach have reached catastrophic proportions.

Japanese writing consists of two distinct kinds of symbols: the Kana (syllable) characters, devoid of meaning and only representing syllable sounds, and the Kanji (Chinese types of characters) devoid of sound and representing only meaning. In Stella S. F. Liu's article, "Decoding and Comprehension in Reading Chinese," in Dina Feitelson's book, Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Reading and Reading Research, International Reading Association, Newark, Delaware, 1978, she refers to an article in Cortex in 1971 by S. Sasanuma and O. Fujimura. The Cortex article reported that Japanese patients with brain damage are sometimes able to read only one part of the Japanese script, the Kana sound portion, or the Kanji meaning portion. This showed clearly that Kana (sound) and Kanji (meaning) printed memories are processed in different parts of the brain. (Japanese children, incidentally, have almost no dyslexia.)

The location of the "sound" memory bank for our kind of print has been known since the 19th century, and was referred to by William James in his psychology book in 1890 and clearly shown in Ladd and Woodworth's Elements of Physiological Psychology, Scribner's Sons, 1911, a revision of George Trumbull Ladd's earlier 1887 edition. It is in the area of the left angular gyrus, and autopsies done on stroke patients who had lost the ability to read provided the evidence for this location. Dr. Mosse referred to the fact that the reading areas exist on both sides of the brain, and Dr. Orton, a neurologist concerned with reading disabilities through the 1930's, stated that dominance for reading should be established on one side of the brain. Dr. Mosse referred to reading as an automatic conditioned reflex, and it would appear that Dr. Orton's "dominance" is nothing more nor less than the establishment of a conditioned reflex to one of the memory banks, either on the left or right in the area of the left or right angular gyrus, although Dr. Mosse said why one or the other reading regions became dominant was unknown. It was assumed that the correct side was the left side, which handles language (speech), rather than the right which is concerned largely with spatial aspects. But we are drilling children to handle print spatially ("meaning") rather than sequentially ("sound"). I find it surprising that Dr. Mosse did not conclude that the reason why one or the other side became dominant in most cases was the result of the teaching method employed when the conditioned reflex was formed: to regard print either as Kanji (right brain) or Kana (left brain) characters. When alphabetic print is taught like Chinese characters, the conditioned reflex should, logically, go to the right brain just as happens with Kanji characters. Both Dr. Orton and Dr. Mosse were, however, concerned with organic damage to the brain, and not what Dr. Mosse referred to as "sociogenic" damage (bad teaching), when they were discussing dominance, so this is possibly why they did not spell out the result of teaching alphabetic print like Chinese characters.

In Inside the Brain, by William H. Calvin, Ph. D., and George A. Ojemann, M. D., A Mentor Book, New York, 1980, on page 32, a drawing is shown of the area damaged in a patient who had lost solely the ability to read, as determined by a "computerized tomographic scan." This older patient, who would have learned to read before 1930, had a stroke in the area of the left angular gyrus, the same as that marked "reading" by Ladd, presumably as early as 1887. Dr. Ojemann and Dr. Calvin also showed on page 32 a redrawing of an illustration from N. Lassen, D. Ingvar and E. Skinhoj's Scientific American article (239 (4): 62, 1978), of blood flow changes during silent reading, and it clearly indicated that the area in the region of the left angular gyrus was active.

All of this confirms the presence of memory banks for print in the areas of the right and left angular gyrus, one of which should handle print as "sound" and the other as pictures with "meaning." The Japanese obviously teach print in an either/or fashion, judging from the brain-damage cases referred to. They read print solely as sound

(Kana characters)or SOLELY as meaning (Kanji characters). At one time, judging from clear cases of 19th century stroke patients, so did we teach print SOLELY as sound. With damage in the area of the left angular gyrus, the patient simply lost all ability to read alphabetic print. Yet now reports are coming in that 20th century people can read print with BOTH sides of the brain. In the New York Times Magazine for May 12, 1985, in an article by Daniel Goleman, he refers to experiments by Davidson, Perl and Saron in which words were shown to be read by EITHER side of the brain. The 19th century stroke victims referred to by James, who had damage solely on the left, would not have lost their ability to read if they were like those subjects of Davidson, Perl and Saron. Clearly, we are now training children to use both memory banks, and this is what the statistical data I obtained in testing about 900 second graders in this country and Europe showed. A "profile" showed up when I compared scores on accuracy, speed, reversals and comprehension, between classes with greater or lesser phonics emphasis. Those with lesser phonics emphasis and greater "meaning" emphasis showed a clear impairment of automatic mechanisms: slower speed, greater reversals, increased oral reading errors, and a narrower range of comprehension scores (showing divided attention - part to "guessing" words and part to ultimate meaning, and also that the narrower range of scores was a function of defective decoding ability).

Although the movement had roots in the early 19th century, the change in this country from "sound" in beginning reading to "meaning" took place about 1930, but the "experts" who prepared Becoming a Nation of Readers include virtually no data from 1930 or before. Surely the fact that the alphabet has been in use for almost 2,900 years in the Western World should have provided SOME experiential grist for the "experts'" mill. Instead, they limited themselves almost completely to narcissistic "studies" by "reading experts" dating from AFTER the advent of the strictly controlled vocabulary,context-guessing reading texts with so-called "intrinsic phonics" which taught sight words and guessing from the context, a "meaning" approach obviously aimed at forming a conditioned reflex to the right angular gyrus area, the Chinese character region. These textbooks, "teaching" reading from grades one to four-through-six, were first written by William Scott Gray of the University of Chicago and Arthur Irving Gates of Columbia Teachers College in 1930 and 1931. Indications are that such textbooks (but overwhelmingly Gray's Scott, Foresman) made nearly a clean sweep in American schools before 1934.

In 1982, I conducted a survey of 50 older teachers who may have been teaching about 1930 (all but one members of the New Jersey Schoolwomen's Club from 1950 or before, which club was organized in 1925). Twenty responded (40% of the group). Of the twenty, only ten had information on practices in the primary grades in 1930, and the other ten said they had no information as they did not teach at that level or at that time. Of the ten who responded, 90% answered "yes" to the question, "Were you personally aware that there was a change in the method of teaching beginning reading after 1930?" Eighty per cent said "yes" to the question, "Were you aware that the 1930 and 1931 Scott, Foresman and Macmillan readers dispensed with traditional phonics?" One hundred per cent answered "no" to this question: "Do you personally have any information on the promotional methods used to cause the introduction of these books?" Eighty per cent were aware of a resulting drop in spelling ability, but eighty per cent were UNAWARE that dictated spelling scales like Ayres' 1915 scale had been replaced with tests involving multiple choices on printed spellings, which involved only visual analysis, and no recall of letter sounds.

Since 1930 and 1931 were among the deepest years of the Depression when many teachers were paid in script because of the near-bankrupt condition of municipalities, it seems highly possible that the textbooks were moved into American schools through foundations underwriting their cost. Foundations did still have large amounts of money to spend during the Depression, as the very beautiful International House dormitory at the University of Chicago was paid for by Rockefeller foundation money, I understand, and it was begun reportedly in 1931. Concerning the possibility that foundations may have underwritten the cost of the Gates and Gray textbooks, it would be of interest to question the Carnegie and Rockefeller foundations, in particular, on this point. In addition, presumably Scott, Foresman and Macmillan (Gates' publisher) would still have some documentation on the sales volume and methods of payment, and whether or not school systems received some sort of bonus for agreeing to take the texts, which would explain their astonishing displacement of the multitudinous textbooks which had been used prior to their arrival. An article by Gates in the Columbia Teachers College Record, "Problems in Beginning Reading," (March, 1925) stated he had picked TWENTY-ONE beginning reading series to analyze, and he listed them, but he also said, "All of the systems were said to be widely used. The twenty-one courses, selected at random from a longer list, presumably provide a representative variety of primary reading methods now in use in this country." So a list of MORE than twenty-one series was necessary to cover reading books used in American first grades in 1925, but by about 1934, Gates' and Gray's 1930-1931 books were dominant. This certainly calls for some kind of an explanation. The other 1925 publishers did NOT go out of business during the Depression, for the names of many he listed in 19[illegible] are still in business.

THE HISTORY OF THE DEAF-MUTE "MEANING" METHOD DRAWING ON THE RIGHT ANGULAR GYRUS MEMORY BANK FOR PRINT, WHICH WAS INTRODUCED FOR NORMAL CHILDREN IN THE 1930 W. S. GRAY AND 1931 A. I. GATES READING BOOKS

Although there is absolutely NO reference to the fact in the "experts'" literature, which fact was turned up by Samuel Blumenfeld in his book, The New Illiterates, (1973, Arlington House, New Rochelle, New York), the Gray and Gates texts and those modeled after them are based on a centuries'-old method of teaching deaf-mutes language. This involves the use of sight words to be read or guessed in a meaningful context, without the use of sound but only "visual analysis," which means to compare one remembered whole sight word to another seen one, to distinguish like parts so as to tell them apart, and then to use context to confirm guesses. Naturally, when children with normal hearing are taught this device of comparing remembered sight words, which they are expected to do while reading silently and alone, some memory of the sounds of the words may come up with the remembered meanings of the words.

When a child "discovers," while completing worksheets with this "intrinsic phonics," that bat, ball and bunion all begin with the same letter and that rake, take and make all end with the same "phonogram" or collection of letters, the child's sound memories of those words may be resurrected to some extent with the visual memories, but unreliably. To use his "intrinsic phonics" in context to decode a new word, he may put the "b" together with the "ake" and combine it with the context, but instead of pronouncing the word "bake," he is very likely to say something like "cook." If this "intrinsic phonics" context-guessing method were reliable, such children would not read "horse" for "pony," "bowl" for "pot," or "war" for "battle," which are three widely quoted examples of such context substitution. The child who was reported to have read "bowl" for "pot" did so after having typed the word, "pot," himself, over and over on the typewriter. He WAS aware of the letters - but did not concern himself with the sound. Such substitutions most commonly meet with the "reading experts'" warm approval, because they demonstrate that the children got the meaning. By contrast, "experts" are appalled at the almost phonically correct misreading of "bottle" for "battle" because the meaning is wrong. Yet any child who is not mentally defective would know he had made an error if he read that his father was in a bottle. The child who read that his father was in a war most commonly would not know that he had made an error.

The point is that children taught "intrinsic phonics" for meaning often end up reading like the deaf-mutes for whom the method was originally tailored and ignore the sound. Interestingly enough, it is a very inferior method even for the teaching of deaf-mutes who learn language far better if their initial learning is based not on meaning but on sound, presumably because the language areas of the brain are on the left side (Broca's and Wernicke's areas), as is the left angular gyrus area memory bank which stores printed memories for sound.

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Institute of Learning Inc.
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March 17, 1986

The Honorable August F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Seconday and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Sir:

Until our children entered the school system, I never really paid much attention to education, other than my own, of course. I assumed that the world consisted of the bright on the top side and then those, graded downward, based on God given talents that each possessed, tempered with the ambition that happened to reside in each to reach whatever goal he desired.

I suppose, if we had only two children, my interest in education might have ended right there, at least in elementary education. But along came Number Three Son and changed all of that. He entered the same school in 1964 and had the same teaching staff as his two older brothers, so we never gave much thought to his progress until about the first of May, 1965. I was reading one Sunday when Craig looked over my shoulder and said, "Dad, I know that word." I asked him what it was and he said "just a minute" and ran off to his room and came back with a little book which he perused for a minute and said "horse". I informed him that the word was "pony" and asked if he knew any more words. He would pick a word from the paper and then would look it up in the book before answering. I called his mother and said "Ginny, it looks as if we have a problem."

The next day Ginny and I presented ourselves at the school and asked to see the Mother Superior, a very dedicated Sister who had accomplished a great deal with the resources given to her to work with. She acknowledged that Craig was having problems and ascribed much of them to the fact that he was left handed and also that he was somewhat stubborn. Well, I could attest to both of these facts, but was somewhat reluctant to write him off for these reasons, as he seemed as bright as any of his

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March 17, 1986
Page 2

brothers who were doing quite nicely. We also found that the school had received some new reading books that year and that this was the first class to receive the benefit of them. Well, the school term came to a close and Craig was passed - but still could not read.

Ginny and I were getting a little frantic about the situation and started searching for a tutor to see if private instruction could improve the situation. Ginny discovered a retired teacher who was willing to take on the task of teaching Craig, even though he was stubborn and left handed. The teacher, Mrs. Talbot, had some material from a pilot program through the Open Court Publishing Company. The material incorporated a method of teaching reading and writing developed by a teacher named Nellie Thomas. We assured her that we were not too familiar with methods of teaching, but were interested in reults. Mrs. Talbot started making the many trips from her home on the other side of Portland to our home in Oregon City and did, indeed, make progress, how much I was soon to discover. One day, I decided to eat lunch at home rather than downtown as I usually did. As i approached the area where we lived, the streets were fully parked and I had to park some distance from my house and walk, thinking that the traffic resulted from a wedding in one of the many churches in the neighborhood. As soon as I opened the door to my house, I discovered that the occupants of many of the cars were in my house and that they were the mothers and children of the first grade that Craig had attended plus some others from other schools! It seemed that many of the children must have been "left handed"! In a few short summer months Mrs. Talbot had accomplished what could not be done in nine months of regular class work;she taught all of the children to read! We later found that the new books that our little school had received were based on the Look-Say Method and that the system Mrs. Talbot used was the Phonics Method. When we found that the Look-Say Method was to be retained at the Catholic school, we sold our home in Oregon City and moved to Redlands where our fourth son could still be taught with the Phonics Method of Open Court, the school having adopted that method.

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March 17, 1986
Page 3

Since then, my wife has devoted much of her time to the promotion of the phonics method of reading, which, though ancient, is still the best method, it seems, for the majority of children. She has seen the improvements that Mrs. Nellie Thomas has made in the method of teaching phonics and, with the generous assistance of many people in the Central Coastal Area of California, founded The Nellie Thomas Institute of learning with the goal of improving the reading and writing skills of all who have a need. They are numerous, and becoming more so. A particular goal of the Institute is in training the teachers who are the key to eliminating illiteracy. The Seminars for the training of teachers have been carried out by Mrs. Thomas, who, though in her late 70's, is continually striving to instruct as many as she can in the techniques which she perfected over her many years in the teaching profession. God willing, she will have many more years in this work.

Please include this letter in the records of the Illiteracy Hearing that you and your committee are holding on March 20, 1986.

Thank you for your efforts to improve the education of the Nation's children.

Sincerely,

Geore D. Carey
Member of the Board

Copy to Senator Edward Zorinsky

P.S. May we also add our very enthusiastic endorsement of Senator Zorinsky's education bill.

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A Non Profit Foundation in the State of California

Jerry and Diane Alexander

Phone (605) 224-2751

1126 N. Central
Pierre, SD 57501

February 17, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary,
and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 34C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Please consider this letter as written testimony to support the establishment of a National Commission on Illiteracy. I ask that such testimony be included in the record of the illiteracy hearing on March 20.

I am a ten-year veteran high school English teacher from two states, three years in Illinois and seven years in South Dakota. I have been a high school principal for two years. During this decade, I have become increasingly concerned and frustrated about students' abilities to read and comprehend. I continue to be amazed at how or why students reach the high school level when they can only read at the fourth or fifth grade levels. Obviously, students are promoted through age rather than through achievement. Unless reading problems are caught in K-2 students, retention becomes increasingly difficult because of social stigmas. Reading problems are soon perpetuated and become irreversible.

Achievement in reading directly relates to achievement in all other academic areas; the converse is also true, and both are supported by research. When students experience reading problems, schools look toward the federally funded Chapter I program of the ECIA (Education Consolidation and Improvement Act) for remedial reading. Although this program is specialized in the teaching of reading to students identified as needing supplementary assistance, it is often staffed by first-year teachers who have no experience and who are not certified beyond the regular elementary level. Chapter I teachers often use the position as a stepping stone into a regular classroom position. Few experienced teachers will consider a Chapter I position because of the job insecurity brought on by the year-to-year funding. I have visited schools that actually generate reading problems by placing three grades (six reading levels) in the same classroom and taught by the same teacher all day. Twelve of nineteen were pulled from the regular classroom for remedial help--all this because the district didn't want to spend money for teachers, but they would remediate children after they had generated the problem. The remediation would be through Chapter I and funded by the federal government.

Membersof the committee, prevention is by far better than remediation. Remediation is not only costly with regard to dollars, but costly with regard to a student's self image. There are better ways to deal with illiteracy.

Research tells us that styles of teaching vary as widely as styles of learning. Perhaps the failure to obtain compatible styles is one cause of illiteracy. The overwhelmingly amount of time spent in front of a television set, parents' apathy toward learning by reading, socioeconomics, low expectations, lack of student effort and/or ability all play important roles in the causes of illiteracy. There are no doubt others.

It is vitally important such causes be sought out and analyzed in order to prevent the need for costly remediation. It is in this light that I strongly suppport Senator Zorinsky's legislation to establish a National Commission on Illiteracy. I ask the members of this Committee to do so as well. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Diane Alexander

Diane Alexander

Route 1
Emerson, Iowa 51533
March 13, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins
Chairman, Subcommittee on Elementary,
Secondary, and Vocational Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Hawkins:

I am writing to you in support of Senator Edward Zorinsky's' bill to establish a National Commission on Illiteracy. I am also enclosing a statement that I would like to have included in the record of the illiteracy hearing to be held on March 20. Illiteracy is a national problem which need not exist. I urge you to address the prevention of this problem. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Peggy Yeager

Peggy Yeager
Reading Tutor

enc.
cc: Sen. Edward Zorinsky

March 13, 1986

Members of the House Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education:

I have been working as a private reading tutor for children in southwestern Iowa for five years. Situated as I am, in a rural community where several school districts meet, I have worked with children from four different school districts. Three of these districts are small, but the one from which I gain by far the most students is the largest one in our area, which has a budget this year of over $4.5 million.

My students have ranged in age from 4 to 16. Many of them had been placed in remedial programs in school ranging from Chapter I to Learning Disabled, some had attended special summer school programs, and a few had been "held back" at least one time. The thing that each of these children had in common was that they had been taught to read using reading series which teach "analytic phonics".

In this type of reading series, consonant sounds are not taught in isolation; students learn many words beginning with the consonant in question and are to infer the sound from these words. Vowels, too, are not taught in isolation but are taught as parts of "clusters": "ack", "amp", "all". One of the results of this method is that children cannot sound out words with new "clusters"; they must be taught each and every possibility. In consequence, phonics instruction stretches out for these children for at least six years. By the time they have been taught many of these "clusters", many of the children have decided it is much easier to guess at unfamiliar words, or to skip them altogether. Unless they are unusually bright, most will not be able to read words which have not been on their controlled vocabulary lists. This is one of the reasons why children who may be getting good grades in reading may score poorly on standardized tests, such as Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.

When these students are brought to me by their parents, they are taught with a "synthetic phonics" approach. This simply means that they are taught all the consonant and short vowel sounds in isolation and then are taught to blend these sounds together to form words. They are then taught the spellings of long vowel sounds, digraphs, diphthongs, and variant spellings for sounds. It's a long hard road, but I have never had a student who hasn't improved. Most children, even those who have been labeled slow or "learning disabled" can learn to read by using a "synthetic phonics" method. Most of these children could have more accurately been labeled "method-disabled" rather than "learning disabled". One of my students who was repeating first grade and had been labeled "learning disabled" was reading at grade level within three months. Four years later, he is still successfully competing with his peers.

Although, as I said, I have never had a student who hasn't improved his reading skills using this method, most never view school with that zest for learning which is so important in making great students. The system has destroyed that in them. Thus, while remediation can work if the right method is used, how much better it would be if that right method were used, in the schools, as the regular classroom reading method. Why should the federal government spend millions of dollars each year to rectify a problem which need never exist? Why should children have to suffer the emotional anguish of being labeled dumb? Why should America lose out on many potential "great" students for such an unnecessary reason?

I love my job, but I hope that soon I won't have it anymore. I hope that soon those millions of dollars of federal money won't be necessary. I hope that soon children won't face the stigma of being called dumb. If we could just convince America's educational establishment that "their" method isn't the best method, all these things would come to pass. Research backs us up. The success of the children backs us up. I hope that, after you have heard the evidence, you'll back us up too. Please support Senator Zorinsky's bill to establish a National Commission on Illiteracy. Thank you.

Peggy Yeager
Peggy Yeager
Route 1
Emerson, Iowa 51533

2209 Madison Avenue
Norfolk, NE 68701
March 12, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary,
and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Hawkins:

I am writing in regard to the illiteracy hearing which will take place on March 20 with the House Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education and am requesting that this letter be included in the record of the hearing.

As an educator involved in Adult Basic Education, I am concerned about the seventy-two million Americans who cannot read above a 5th grade level. Many of the high school drop-outs who attend my adult reading improvement classes have dropped out of school because they simply cannot read well enough to keep up with the rest of their class.

I am shocked that last year the U.S. Army spent over $14 million to bring its recruits up to the ninth grade level in reading.

Time and time again I see these reading problems resulting from the lack of phonetic teaching methods. I do not understand why our schools have gotten away from teaching phonics.

As a result of my concerns, I have written and self-published a phonics book entitled Get Back to Phonics which is now in its third printing. While it was written primarily for adults, it is currently being used by reading teachers in schools across the country.

I strongly support our school systems, and yet I am frustrated over the fact that many parents who are home-schooling their children are doing so with the idea that they will be able to teach their children these vital basics which are not being taught in our schools.

I urge educators to re-evaluate their reading programs, and to implement phonetic methods if at all possible. I strongly support the legislation on illiteracy as proposed by Senator Edward Zorinsky.

Yours truly,

Barbara Shattuck

Barbara Shattuck

cc: Senator Edward Zorinsky

BARBARA CUETER
1845 ORCHARD LANE
BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN 48010

PHONE
313-645-9020
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March 18, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
House Subcommittee on Elementary,
Secondary, and Vocational Education
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is testimony which I ask that it be included in the record of the illiteracy hearing scheduled for March 20, 1986.

If anyone should be interested, I have probably the most extensive record of any child's school years, including transcripts of IEPC meetings which clearly reveal how the schools skirt and circumvent existing rules and regulations and how they use expert techniques to intimidate parents.

I have studied beginning reading methods for about eighteen months now as well as how on earth we got into this mess in the first place. It is almost inconceivable that it was by accident alone. Surely, we cannot wait for accident to get us out of this educational chaos!

Yours very truly,

Barbara Cueter

Barbara Cueter

BC:bb

BARBARA CUETER
1846 ORCHARD LANE
BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN 48010

PHONE
313-647-1847

March 18, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
House Subcommittee on Elementary,
Secondary, and Vocational Education

Gentlemen:

For several years reports critical of the condition of our American Public Schools have been issued. There's no need now to list them. Debate continues over what the schools should do, what the Federal role should be, what the Legislative role should be. Little is heard, however, from the parents, children, and the teachers who are the subjects of this great debate.

As a parent, my experience with the public schools has been been nothing short of disastrous. For years, I didn't understand what the problem was. I paid for tutors, special education, medicine, drugs, private schooling, and watched helplessly as our three children (boys) were moved along through our public schools with no learning of basic facts, reading, writing, spelling, math. I was told each of our three sons was "minimally brain dysfunctioned. And we were told they inherited this "disability" from their father, who, by the way, was born abroad and brought to this country in the late 20's, in time now, I have learned, to be one of the first generation of children subjected to America's new reading method.

When my children began school in the 1960's and were first "diagnosed" learning disabled, I didn't believe it. I had been with those little boys since birth. I had watched their progress, played with them, read with them. But the term "minimal brain dysfunction" was terribly enervating. No one, no doctor, no educator, no psychologist, ever suggested or hinted at the idea that perhaps another beginning reading method would offer a solution or "cure" to my sons' reading problems. It was accepted as unquestioned fact that such condition was beyond refutation. The research was done - the case closed. But still, I could not believe it.

And so, I kept every scrap of paper, every note, I could get my hands on from school. I searched books and consulted with doctors and teachers and educators, at University level and grass roots level. Always, I was on the treadmill - feeling that I was missing something. And round and round we went.

As time progressed, one son elected to attend a private Catholic military high school. There, for the first time his reading "problem" was addressed, and within two years his "minimal brain dysfunction" disappeared. We were told he "outgrew" it, as sometimes happens.

Our second son struggled along until his last year of high school, barely able to read, and finally dropped out. He later obtained his GED diploma, but his hopes of further academic achievement were destroyed. He simply could not read well enough to keep up. I will always wonder what would have happened if we, too, had sent him to the Catholic military high school.

We searched everywhere on God's earth for other educational programs for our third son. We took him to clinics and universities for diagnostic testing. Sometimes the results were "normal" and other times they were "minimally brain dysfunctioned." We were confused. He simply was all right in every way ...... except he was not learning to read. Well, the years went by with tutors, private schooling, and then special education.

After he was placed in special education, his progress stopped, and in fact regressed. Nothing was ever done to teach him how to read ...... and his parents were instructed not to try because "children like Rob were embarrassed to let their parents see his flaws." He was told he had a short memory span. His school notes are full of references and inuendoes "mother refused counseling." They wanted to teach my son to "accept" his disability".... when all he ever wanted to do was learn how to read!

Finally, this last summer, at the age of 19, we learned of a school in Toronto, Canada, which specialized in teaching children who had problems learning to read. Rob spent one summer there, and for the first time in his life he was introduced to phonics. He learned more about reading in that one summer than he had learned in twelve years of public schooling! When the summer was over, we searched everywhere in our community for a phonics teacher. There were none!

The condition of public schooling in this country is appalling. We hear talk of reform. Well, I have been visiting schools and going to meetings and conferences regarding education.

Let me tell you there is no reform!!!!!!!!!!!!

I sat through a class the other day on "critical thinking skills." Teach your students to think more logically and at a higher level was the message. Youcan do this by:

> "Give your students a list of five or ten scrambled words. Let them unscramble the words."

The list of words recommended was of words with ten or 12 letters in them!

Everything I read talks of adult illiteracy. Apparently, adult illiteracy just happens when one reaches about sixteen years old. There is no mention of reading methods for beginning reading instruction.

I was pleased to hear that Secretary Bennett finally said phonics is the best way to teach beginning reading instruction. But he carefully avoided mentioning METHODS. What is a good phonics method? What is a bad phonics method? What is the difference between real phonics and phony phonics.

Teachers colleges teach phony phonics. Why doesn't anyone address that situation.

Why doesn't some teacher sue the college of education for sending her into the classroom to teach reading without preparing her with sound, proven reading methods????????

Have our teachers been so misguided and miseducated they are helpless to teach a child to read? The answer is yes. Heaven help us all!

We employ about 100 employees. Every year it becomes harder to find young applicants who can even read well enough to complete an application form. It has become a pat question, "Can I take it home and fill it out?" We have learned not to allow this - because after the person was hired, we learned he could not read ... or write .... or spell .... anything.

A few months ago, my husband had to fire a young man who could not read notes of instruction or anything else in spite of having graduated from high school. The young man cried and begged for his job. My husband was torn apart because it could have been his own son who was being fired.

He, thereupon, began construction to establish our own classroom to teach reading and other basic skills.

If the schools are not going to teach reading, writing, spelling, and basic math facts ..... what are we to do?

Frankly, I know what I am going to do. I am going to work to get every child I can out of public school. I have been researching, visiting schools, both private and public, in my community, across the states and Canada. There are methods that work. There are ways to teach children to read. I am even considering opening my own school.

But I see no hope of incorporating those methods in public schools in time to save other generations of children from a life frought with despair, economic failure, and total frustration.

Depending on one's political philosophy, there is advantage to our present educational system. It builds a larger welfare state every year. The male has become a useless member of our society when welfare checks arrive with dependability he cannot guarantee because of his poor academic and employment skills.

I believe that every teacher must be able to teach a direct, intensified, multisensory phonics program. I believe if the colleges of education do not willingly see to that, it behooves our elected representatives to mandate it!

Not only that, but if our elected representatives feel any obligation to their constituents, they must take one further step. They must themselves identify those reading programs that work and recommend them ..... if not mandate them.

Education begins with teaching a child how to read. Failing that, how can we hope to accomplish anything else?

Yours very truly,

Barbara Cueter

Barbara Cueter

BC:bb

Route 1
Emerson, Iowa 51533
March 14, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins
Chairman, Subcommittee on Elementary,
Secondary, and Vocational Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Hawkins:

I would like to respectfully suggest that you and your fellow members of the House Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education would be doing the present and future students of our nation a great service if you would join Senator Zorinsky and the other co-sponsors in seeking passage of the National Commission on Illiteracy Act. A strong country has always been a priority issue for all Americans. A good education for its young people has always been the foundation. Many of us fear this foundation has begun to crumble.

Because of my concerns, I have enclosed testimony I would like to have included in the record of the illiteracy hearing that is to be held by your subcommittee on March 20, 1986. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Janet Peterson

Janet Peterson

enc.
cc: Senator Edward Zorinsky

March 14, 1986

Members of the House Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education:

I first wrote Senator Zorinsky in April, 1985, after an article appeared in our local newspaper about the twenty United States Senators who were seeking legislation calling for a massive study of why we, the taxpayers, are paying for remediation in basic elementary reading for adults holding high school graduation diplomas. The question fell in line with questions I had been posing for over five years about our local school system's secondary remediation program, and the bloating of curriculum and staff to accommodate the lack of basic lower elementary skills of our secondary students. A bit of background should explain my concerns.

Our public school of less than 1500 students, K-12, is located in a small, clean-environment, farming community in Iowa. We have few truly indigent families, no minorities, no refugees, no non-English-speaking families, or any of the other like excuses other areas profess. We have modern, bright, cheerful school buildings. Our student-teacher ratio is no more than 22 to 1, K-6, with aides assisting in kindergarten. Teachers' salaries average above the salaries of other employees in the community. State and local funds appropriated to our system surpass the $3,000 per-student mark. Additional Chapter I federal funding and other federal grant dollars also reach us.

As you can see, our school system is fortunate in that we are not plagued with any of the obstacles toward student academic success listed in the vast number of studies released by the educational establishment in recent years. I feel our community does have one major educational problem that never seems to be addressed in any of the studies, that being: There are no private or religious schools in our section of the state, and since Iowa has a very rigid home-school law, the public school system is the only game in town. However, the "experts" who study such things do not appear to find this to be worrisome, so based on all the aforementioned factors that are a concern in the studies, our students should excel. Too many don't even keep up.

We have an 8 to 10% of K-12 enrollment "staffed" as "learning disabled" and "special-ed". For at least the past eight years one-third of our second-grade students have qualified for remedial reading under the guidelines of Chapter I. During this time we have found 15 to 20% of our total elementary enrollment, grades 2 through 6, qualifying for Chapter I in both reading and math. Why? After several years of trying to understand the cause and trying to find solutions, I have come to some personal conclusions.

It is my opinion that the problems begin very early on with the kindergarten round-up held in the spring for fall enrollment. At this time we take excited, bright, eager-to-learn, five-year-olds and begin a process called "screening" that is supposed to enable the staff and the resident school psychologist to spot signs of why these children may or may not be able to learn. The basis for this is Dr. Piaget's theories on the human development process and its effect on academic learning. In the fall the chosen are enrolled in a half-day, five-day-week, socialization program with a curriculum developed to enhance fine and gross motor skills. Their only contact with reading at this time is a small portion of time spent learning letter recognition and sounds utilizing the inflated letter-people, Alphatimes, that were originally created to be used in the "educably retarded" classrooms. With this program, the only distinction made between consonant and vowel sounds is that the vowel letter-people have names that start with the short vowel sound and are also of the feminine gender while the consonants are males.

After a few months, some of the little ones become disenchanted with school and its lack of challenge and begin to show signs of "withdrawal" or "rebellion". They become anti-social and begin to create problems in the classroom. At this point the resident psychologist is consulted and parents are brought in to talk over the possibility of their children suffering from some mental or physical malady, a "learning disability". In too many cases they are then "staffed". At the end of a full year of tolerating the dehumaninizing effect of such a kindergarten program, the students are then given a psychological test that is supposed to measure the development of the children and their potential for going on into the "real world" of academics in the first grade. Based on the results of that test, the "ability grouping" of the students begins in first grade. We have now laid the groundwork in each individual cummulative file for the tracking of success or failure of that child academically for the remaining twelve years in the system. We have now laid the groundwork to place the failures of the methodology, the teachers, and the system on the child.

The failures because of a misbegotten methodology now start in first grade. Our school does not teach reading through intensive systematic phonics. The Alphatimes letter-people are the last time students will draw out short vowel sounds. They are never taught blending or syllabication. The instructors attempt to teach them to read and spell through "rote memorization". The phonics referred to in our basal reader's scope and sequence is teaching through the phonogram and rhyming work principal with picture association. During the first year of reading instruction our students are expected to memorize, through word flashcards and picture association, 445 words of the English language. With this method, if they have mastered these words, that is their total reading vocabulary after a year of hard, frustrating work.

How many master the 445 words? Only about twenty percent. We have also added to the list of students who have "learning disabilities". At this time in our school we have, at the end of first grade, already succeeded in starting eighty percent of the students down the road to being "functionally or marginally illiterate" adults. Some are salvaged by concerned parents who seek outside tutoring by someone who teaches them the magic of "sounding out" words, and a few more find a lone teacher in the system who has knowledge of systematic phonics. At the end of sixth grade, the "learning disabled" of kindergarten and first grade are still staffed as such, and more have gained this label. Twenty percent a year have been through Chapter I remediation and we still find fifty-nine percent below grade level in their abilities. Since formal reading instruction ceases for most at the end of sixth grade, we now send far too many students into the secondary educational system with abilities in reading, spelling, and writing as low as third grade level.

Federal money poured into education for remediation has not been the answer. It does not reach all students who qualify and for those it does reach it is too little too late. Also, too many students who are served find little benefit from it because the money does not carry with it strict guidelines on the method to be used. Many times the Chapter I students who are fortunate enough to find themselves with a remediation teacher who does use the systematic phonics method gain little ability for the time spent. It is very difficult and time consuming to remediate a poor reader who has been first instructed using the wrong methodology; "look-say". It is even more difficult to remediate a poor reader who has been taught with look-say when the on-going classroom instruction constantly reinforces his bad, "look-say", habits and contradicts the remedial systematic phonics instruction. "Operation Head-Start" showed some measure of success only because it served very young children and the money was accompanied by regulations restricting the teaching of reading to an intensive phonics-first method, "Distar".

The creation of the existing situations I have addressed was not accomplished overnight. I feel it began years ago in the teachers' colleges. In Iowa, to become an elementary teacher who can be certified by the state, one must now have four years of college. There is a shocking lack of methodology classes required, with great emphasis placed on the psychology approach in teaching: make the child feel "good" about himself and he will surely learn to read. The single most required subject area to be covered is the "ologies"; Human Growth and Development, Sociology, Educational Psychology, and such. This emphasis on the "ologies" prepares our early elementary teachers to "spot" problem areas in a child's psyche that might prevent him from learning. In other words, I feel we now are educating our educators to be diagnosticians instead of teachers.

I am convinced that one major cause of the breakdown of America's education today is what I call "organized illiteracy", the unionizing of the education profession. I believe many of the problems have been created from an overwhelming zeal for a wider variety of jobs in the field of education, which led to the need to demand more and more funding to finance the results. There is now a far larger membership in the national unions and their local chapters than could ever have been imagined just a few years ago. Unionizing of the profession has created a national power structure to equal no other in our country. With this power of the education establishment, parents have been rendered virtually helpless where their children's education is concerned.

In the '70s, Iowa, a right-to-work state, enacted a very broad collective bargaining law for its teachers which was strongly lobbied for by education leadership in the state. This law includes an impossible termination clause. The termination of a public school teacher in this state today is almost as rare as a full day void of a dollar being spent in government. With absolute job security in place for existing staff, the backlog of teachers looking for a job became staggering.

State legislation was passed establishing a state foundation funding formula that funds the public schools on a headcount basis. This assured the schools would do everything they could to keep every student in school for thirteen years. Little by little the educational requirements were legislatively expanded to require schools to offer a vast variety of courses, even down to requiring them to prepare the students for lifetime leisure activities. Legislation was also enacted that poured more headcount money into the schools for the "learning disabled" and the special-ed students. It is a weighted formula that considers the severity of the "disability": the more severe the handicap, the more money per student. Very broad guidelines for enrolling students in these programs were also established at the time. The federal government joined the fold and also began putting money into our schools for remediation. Since remediation money can't be used for the same students who are served with the state "weighted" money, different students bring in different dollars. Time does not allow the same teachers to accommodate both programs, so different teachers must be employed for each.

The results of poor educational policy and instruction in early elementary education is a self-perpetuating situation. What does a school do with such a wide variety of abilities when students reach the secondary system, especially when the headcount funding encourages keeping them in school? At this point the system must accommodate the skill level of every student who reaches the secondary level, even the "poor disabled" student who could not learn. We must now broaden the offerings allowed for credit toward graduation. We must now include hobby and play classes and over-simplified elementary level classes for the required math and English. We can't discriminate, so EVERY high school student must be given the same options to acquire credits toward their diploma regardless of their capabilities. It is frightening the number who choose to take the easier route. It is amazing how many different types of teachers are now necessary to fill all the needs in our school. All this has come to pass so slowly that the general population was taken aghast when it all became so evident. I also believe most of today's classroom teachers are well-meaning people who have gotten caught up in the situation.

It is not hard to understand the unions' public animosity toward trying to make any kind of major changes in the general way America's educational needs are served. If the problems were to be corrected in the early elementary years where they most often originate, the ripple effect throughout elementary, secondary, and college levels would be devastating to the job security of thousands of their members. In our particular situation, our enrollment has declined a fourth in the past twenty-five years, yet the number of certified staff is reasonably the same, the budget has increased by more than 500%, and educational quality -- success -- is at an all-time low. The majority of our state legislature is now educators. Suggested improvements for the state's education systems are to expand the mandatory offerings further, and, of course, additional funding to education is still held as the highest priority for success.

Parents are the soldiers who must ultimately fight the war on poor education. Parents, then, must be given the arms they need to fight that war. The only weapon they possess at this time is to educate their little ones at home after they have satisfied the truancy laws of the state. This is a short-term victory. The long-term solution is to educate the parents on the problems, then to allow them the right to choose ANY school they believe will do the best job for their children; whether that be religious, private, home-school, or even just a different public school. State and federal laws now prohibit the parents' right of choice. Education is the only product purchased in the United States that has had laws enacted to protect its turf. A parent must by law purchase the product for his children, but the laws prohibit that consumer's freedom to spend his money on the brand he prefers.

We must put competiton into education. Without it the educational establishment completely controls how well, or how poorly, our children will be educated. Monopolies breed complacency and arrogance for those in control. That is dangerous in any business, but when it comes to the welfare of our youngsters it is inexcusable. With competition, changes in methodology and policy could be requested and the requests might be heeded for fear of losing customers. Through personal experience I can assure you that even lowering oneself to "pleading" for change is politely ignored as things stand now.

I strongly feel that there are many changes that need to be made to correct the decline in America's educational status. I have outlined some of them in this statement. It is my honest opinion that to ensure any significant changes will be made, the educational power structure must be broken. I believe this can be accomplished if we return control of the children's education to the parents. Evidence seems to indicate that the "experts" have failed. The parents want and need help in understanding and correcting the shortcomings. Also, the parents want and need to help. Helping them to understand why their children are failing to learn early on is absolutely essential. The National Commission on Illiteracy Act would be a good beginning. I respectfully request, for millions of children, support of this piece of legislation by the members of this honorable committee. Thank you for allowing me to plead their case today.

Sincerely,

Janet Peterson

Janet Peterson
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MAXINE NADEL OFFENBACH
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March 17, 1986

The Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and
Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Hawkins:

Please include this letter in the record of the hearings on the causes of illiteracy with reference to the methods of teaching reading.

When a child reads well, he has one of the basic foundations on which to build a positive self-image and develop his intellect. These elements will enable him to fully participate in life with complete confidence and independence. The world becomes filled with possibilities. If however, he is unable to read with competence, his perspective will be narrowed and limited. There is a clear relationship between literacy and a properly designed reading program just as there is an unmistakable connection between a faulty reading program and the alarming rise in illiteracy.

Today when we see children who are unable to read textbook material, unable to spell or write as they should, we blame the schools and the teachers. It is my belief that most teachers entered the profession determined to do a good job. Since the early forties, teachers were instructed to use a memorization approach to teach reading. This system, called the "look and say" or "whole-word" method had been developed to teach deaf children to "speak." Almost immediately, this system was proven ineffective. It did not teach reading skills beyond a basic vocabulary. "Normal" children already had a "speaking" vocabulary. In the 1950's when a child could not learn to read effectively, it was suggested that he was not working up to his potential. Today when the children are not reading up to grade level, the teachers and the schools are said to be at fault. Extensive research into reading methods have proven that the reading method itself is to blame.

There is another approach to teaching reading called Intensive Phonics. Phonics is the skill or process of sounding out or decoding words by using the sounds of the letters of the alphabet. Those skills apply to 85 to 90 percent of the English language. All of this information has been known and documented in a book called Why Johnny Still Can't Read by Rudolf Flesch. Mr. Flesch made clear that children who cannot decode or read fluently will not be able to read books that will challenge their intellect. With the Intensive Phonics method, once the skills are mastered, there is no confusion, no stumbling, no guessing, and no need for assistance. The child learns independence from the beginning of his educational experience. Since the "whole-word" method encourages dependence, guessing and requires little intellectual involvement, it has resulted in test scores that have declined, and books that have been watered down. The learning of foreign languages has been all but eliminated and reading for knowledge and pleasure has lost it's value. Because students have a limited vocabulary they are unable to read about historical events, thereby loosing a continuity that connects our past to our present. The intricacies of science are out their grasp because of the complicated vocabulary. When children are unable to decode unfamiliar words, they give up in frustration and seek out the easily digestible pap on television. They do not know how to assimilate information, and are unable to dedicate themselves to anything that requires effort or commitment. This diet does not foster intellectual growth. If the current method of teaching reading is so correct, why are we teaching remedial reading to college freshmen?

The controversy continues to this day as to the best method of teaching reading and still most teachers are aware of only the "look and say" or "whole-word" method. In some of our colleges of education, there are those who would argue that the system chosen to teach reading does not matter. Based on my experience in the classroom, I have found that the correct method for teaching reading does matter. I am discouraged that we are still debating the issue, when the research answered the question of "Why Johnny Can't Read" so clearly. Studies done by educators such as Dr. Jeanne Chall of Harvard University, Dr. Patrick Groff of San Diego State University, Isabel L. Beck, Assoc. Prof, University of Pittsburgh, and S. Jay Samuels, University of Minnesota, are all in agreement on one point. These educators find that the use of Intensive Phonics to teach beginning reading is superior to any other method. We can help the schools improve the education of our children by improving the way we teach beginning reading. We can prevent the insidious growth of illiteracy in America by eliminating the faulty "look and say" reading method that has caused a breakdown in learning. Once a child learns to decode our language, he is able to read anything because he is not limited to the small vocabulary taught in the basal readers.

After teaching for seventeen years, I am keenly aware of the fact that children seem to be less interested in learning. It is my belief that a teaching technique (the "look and say" or "whole-word" system) that fosters a lack of initiative, imagination, and independence, restricts our children's enjoyment of reading. It is so clear that good readers become good learners. As teachers, we are not in a position to change the reading system. Most teachers are not even aware that choices exist and that the "look and say" or "whole-word" system is not the best method of teaching reading. We need to educate parents, administrators, school boards, the community and re-educate teachers in the use of intensive phonics. With confident, capable readers, enthusiasm for teaching and learning abounds. With the adoption of intensive phonics to teach reading, we can begin to make real strides towards wiping out illiteracy and afford everyone the opportunity to be a productive and fulfilled citizen.

The educational reform proponents say that we need to stiffen the requirements for the children as well as for the teachers, and I whole heartily agree with this. We can require more academic excellence but if children do not read with any better skill than they possess presently, they will be unable to achieve this goal. Our children don't know how to read competently because of the "whole-word" method that is being used in most public schools today. Many times one can hear a teenager say "we haven't had this word yet."

My students are classified as educable mentally retarded and although my supervisors have been pleased with their progress, I have not been comfortable with their lack of reading skills. We used the "whole-word" memorization approach because we knew of nothing better. A year and a half ago I began using an intensive phonics system to teach reading. To everyone's delight, after six months of instruction, most of my students were demonstrating a growth of six months to a year and a half in reading skills. Retarded children are not expected to show this much growth. Because of their new-found reading accomplishments, feelings of self worth, pride, and independence increased. These are the very skills that I see lacking in many "normal" children of today. If a retarded child can learn to read so skillfully and so quickly, just imagine what a "normal" child with "normal" abilities could accomplish.

The use of intensive phonics in first grade teaches the reading skills necessary to learn to read more efficiently. Mrs. Marva Collins (Director of West Side Preparatory School, Chicago, Illinois) teaches four year olds to read at the first grade level in four months. Mrs. Charlotte Lockhart (Author: Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself) teaches first graders to read in six months. Dr. Jeanne Chall of Harvard says: "Children first learn to read and by third or fourth grade, they read to learn if they have been taught by intensive phonics. All the materials necessary to teach intensive phonics represent a fraction of the cost of a "whole-word" program, and once the child has the reading skills, he needs no special books, he can read from any material including classic literature.

It is my contention that by helping all children learn to read, illiteracy will be eliminated. People who know how to read can break the cycle of illiteracy. Federal statistics point to "a 20 percent functional illiteracy rate among adults...a minority youth illiteracy rate as high as 40 percent, and an increase of 2.3 million adult illiterates each year." I know the idea of Intensive Phonics being related to ending illiteracy may sound simplistic, but to me it is logical, obvious, inexpensive, and clear cut.

The time to act is now, before we produce more generations of functional illiterates. I urge you to consider Senator Zorinsky's, National Commission on Illiteracy Act.

Thank you for your time. There are teachers around the country who are deeply concerned about the failings of our schools. They do not know that they are using a defective reading system and this commission will help to remedy that problem. We can improve the education of our children, the status of the teachers and renew the image of the school as a valuable place of learning.

Sincerely,

Maxine Nadel Offenbach

Maxine Nadel Offenbach, B.S., M.S., Boston University
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6008 Ladd Road
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March 12, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and
Vocational Education
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Hawkins:

I appreciate this opportunity to add my comments to the record of the hearing to be held on March 20, 1986 concerning the national problem of illiteracy. Illiteracy can be compared to cancer in our society; everyone worries about it but the problem is ephemeral until it hits home.

My youngest child at the age of 10 was not reading. I had pleaded with the Prince Georges County, Md., school system to find out what was wrong with him. Finally I discovered P.L. 94-142 and demanded that Brian be tested. I could not understand why a ten year old was not reading and why the school system wasn't as concerned as I was. He was extensively tested including psychological tests, I.Q. tests, learning disability tests, vision tests, hearing tests---nothing was found wrong except that Brian didn't like school and he seemed to be immature by a year for his chronological age.

The educators advised that Brian receive counseling concerning his dislike for school which he did. They also advised that he be kept in the Specific Language Reading Development program which had been developed by the then Superintendent of Schools (Dr. Feeney) and then sold to the school system. I was, on the one hand, relieved that there was nothing seriously wrong with Brian, yet I was puzzled why he could not read.

Quite by accident I happened to meet a person who tutors children in reading. She offered to evaluate Brian for me which she did at no cost. She agreed with me and the educators---Brian was not reading. However, she said, "I can teach your son to read." By now, wary of educators and solutions, I thought to myself, "Sure you can, honey." But Brian was still game to try to learn so off we went twice a week to Mrs. Sheppard's house. Mrs. Sheppard would spend between 30 and 45 minutes at a time with Brian. She started off by teaching him his vowel and consonant sounds. The school system had used the "sight" method to teach Brian to read---look at the word, memorize it and the next time it's seen, it will be "recognized." This method did not work with Brian nor with thousands of others as I've since learned.

After eight weeks with Mrs. Sheppard, Brian hopped in the car one day and said, "I'm going to read every sign on the way home." And, with a few exceptions, he did. I was elated.

Mrs. Sheppard is a high school graduate whose own son did not learn to read in school. The Grandmother gave her Dr. Flesch's book, "Why Johnny Can't Read." Mrs. Sheppard then learned to use phonics to teach her son to read. Since then, she has taught many children to read, including Brian.

The extent of illiteracy in America is shameful. College professors of education, textbook publishers and "remedial" reading teachers, Special Education teachers and private corporations all make money off exploiting parents' desire that their children read. It is past time that this hoax was exposed and that the education establishment be forced to use the only method that easily and successfully teaches people to read---intensive phonics.

The National Commission on Illiteracy Act will do much to shed light on the extent and causes of illiteracy. The illiteracy problem can be solved and it won't take stacks of federal money and/or hoards of educational "experts."

Those who are adults and cannot read will need to be taught to read by private, non-profit literacy organizations. Children will be prevented from becoming illiterate by early and sole use of phonics in the pre-school, kindergarden and primary grades. Those who have turned to a life of crime can be taught to read while in prison and perhaps will then be able to find gainful employment. No longer will Army manuals have to be written on a fourth-grade reading level.

Our hopes and prayers are with you during the illiteracy hearing. With a nation of non-readers, we are truly at risk.

Respectfully,
Judith M. Waby
Judy Waby
735-2926

cc: Sen. Mathias
Sen. Sarbanes
Rep. Hoyer
Reading Reform Foundation
Mrs. Sharon Sheppard
Senator E. Zorinsky
Gov. Baliles (Va.)
Superintendent/P.G. County Schools

55 Cathedral Rock Dr.
Unit #10
Sedona, Arizona 86336
March 12, 1986

The Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education
U. S. House of Representatives
Room B, 346 C. Rayburn Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Mr. Hawkins:

I am a firm supporter of Senator Zorinsky's legislation which seeks to determine the causes of illiteracy. The Senator should be commended for being the first one to ever suggest that an examination of teacher-training courses at our colleges of education may reveal a major cause. My own experiences have convinced me. Therefore, I respectfully request that my letter be included as testimony in the record of the illiteracy hearing on March 20.

I am deeply concerned over the way our schools teach beginners to read. I have been a remedial teacher and a private tutor, now retired. I have taught many older students to read, students who came to me with the usual educationally-disabled labels. Yet, except for one or two, these students would not have needed my services had they been taught appropriately in their beginning instruction. I have retrained only a handful out of the millions whose faulty beginning instructions contribute to their educational and economic handicaps.

Even the emotional problems many of my students exhibited because of their miserable experiences were alleviated once they learned to read and write successfully, and once they discovered that the problem was not something in herently wrong with them. Psychological scars remain, however. They have lived too long with the ego-damaging labels the schools misplace on students' inabilities to use the sight whole-word method of reading instructions. Most of these students never receive appropriate remediation. The school's answer to the problem is more of the same and that usually paid for through federally-funded programs. No one questions the method of instruction.

When I was fifty-four years of age, I returned to the university to pursue a degree in education. My aim was to become a teacher of reading, to teach the so-called "learning disabled" students. However, I did not learn to teach reading successfully in any one of the five language arts methods courses I was required to take at the college of education. In every course and in every subsequent seminar, the professors of education never relaxed their determined and concerted efforts to persuade teachers to avoid the teaching of phonics. We never heard of important reading method research disfavorable to the whole-word sight method, such as the USOE 1960 First Grade Reading Studies, or the important research in Harvard Professor Dr. Jeanne Chall's book, Learning to Read: The Great Debate (1967). Nor did my professors appreciate my citing such research in class discussions.

Unlike my younger colleagues who believed their methods courses had trained them adequately to be master teachers of reading, I enrolled after graduation in a three-week phonics course sponsored by an agency outside the education establishment. The logic underlying the phonics method of instruction told me much about the reasons for so many failures with whole-word sight instruction. This short three-week course was all I needed to start me on the way to becoming a successful reading teacher.

Does not all of this cry out for a close-up investigation?

If the stranglehold the colleges of education have on the teaching of reading can be broken, we will have gone a long way toward conquering illiteracy, believe me. However, opposition will be great. The theologians of the education profession have a huge number of followers within their own ranks and influential adherents in the general populace. So, it behooves every one of our elected congressmen to support Senator Zorinsky's timely legislation; to think first of the millions of children who deserve a better start in their educational careers than the professional experts are now handing them. They should be asking, "Would there be an illiteracy problem if the experts were doing their jobs?"

Respectfully,

Mrs Elizabeth Dubbell

Mrs. Elizabeth Dubbell

cc: Senator Edward Zorinsky
U. S. Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

March 13, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins
Chairman,Subcommittee on Elementary,Secondary, and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Representative Hawkins:

I would like to request that my following comments be included in the record of the illiteracy hearing on March 20, 1986.

I have been a teacher for the past twenty years. For the last seven years I have been in the field of Adult Education working as the lead instructor of the GED Program at the Hennepin County Adult Corrections Facility. Our students are the highschool dropouts of several years ago...Students with average or above average ability who are reading far below functional literacy levels.

Our public schools have failed these students. Research clearly indicates that phonics based reading programs succeed in teaching the fundamentals of reading and spelling. Yet for the past 30 years most schools have employed the whole word, "sight method" of teaching reading. It is estimated that only 15% of our schools are using the phonics method.

It is the phonics method that works! I wish that I could demonstrate the method that we have been using for the past year. The program is entitled "Discover Intensive Phonics for Yourself." Its author is Charlotte Lockhart, an educator from Decatur,Ill. The method is ingeniously simple and INEXPENSIVE. The materials to service an entire classroom cost $89.00. Discover Intensive Phonics is a MULTISENSORY approach. Results are quick and they last. In one hour I could give you an understanding of this logical, sequential system. A system in which students can experince ONLY SUCCESS. A system that teaches in FIVE MONTHS what most programs take two to three years to accomplish.

I whole-heartedly support Senator Edward Zorinsky's legislation and hope that you and the members of your committee will do so as well.

Sincerely,
Sue Bangert
Sue Bangert
368 Margaret Circle
Wayzata, MN 55391

175 S. Ridge Street - Port Sanilac, Michigan 48469 - (313) 622-8110

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins
Chairman - Subcommittee on
 Elementary, Secondary, and
 Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

March 15, 1986

I have been informed, Congressman Hawkins, by Senator Edward Zorinsky of Nebraska that you will be hearing witnesses on March 20, 1986 regarding the important issue of Illiteracy, giving attention to its causes and prevention.

I wish to submit my testimony, stated herein, and have it included within the official record of the Illiteracy Hearing March, 20 1986.

I have been a Reading Teacher for the past thirty years for the Public Schools in the State of Michigan. I am certified in both elementary and secondary education - with Master of Arts degrees in Reading Instruction and Learning Disabilities. I am also the author of an Intensive Phonics Beginning Reading Series presently in use in the Port Sanilac Elementary School District. My books are being used in a pilot program for the primary grades.

My many years of teaching experience in the classroom have been devoted to the teaching of reading. I can state unequivocally that the Intensive Phonics Method is the only beginning reading program that produces a successful, competent and literate student. I have tried every method available to the professional reading teacher in the schools today - and have not found any method other that the Intensive Phonics Method that produces a literate student.

My extensive research and teaching experience have led me to the conclusion that the cause of Illiteracy, which continues to rise each year, is a direct result of the teaching methods presently in use in the primary grades in our schools today. I also know, from experience and research, that the only way to prevent a futher increase in the Illiteracy in this country is to immediately abandon the "Look-Say" or "Sight Method" of teaching beginning reading and initiate an Intensive Phonics Method of teaching beginning reading for students in grades One, Two and Three.

I have concisely documented evidence supporting my research in the form of standardized test results, informal test results, student and parent affidavits, statements from teachers who have used my Reading Series, and Administrators in the schools where my Series has been implemented.

I am willing to testify and present this evidence to your committee. If you have any comments and/or questions please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address and/or phone number.

Sincerely

Ann Patricia Lane

Ann Patricia Lane

102 East Ravalli
Hamilton, Mt. 59840
March 15, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins
Chairman, Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary and Vocational Education
Room B 346
United States House of Representatives
C. Rayburn Building
Washington D. C. 20515

Dear Honorable Hawkins:

I have been advised that there will be a hearing, March 20 of your subcommittee who will hear witnesses relative to the National Commission on Illiteracy. I should like to have my testimony included in the record of the hearing.

In the March 7 issue of the Missoulian, Secretary of Education, William J. Bennett commented on the report, "What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning." He recommended teaching children to read with phonics--learning to recognize the sounds that combinations of letters make rather than the look-say approach of recognizing whole words. I agree that this is the only sensible way to teach students and non-reading adults.

From my experience I have found that even adults who have not been taught to read in our public schools can learn to read very quickly with intensive phonics. Why waste the tax-payers' money using the out-dated, ineffective, look-say system which does not work with many children and which is responsible for the large number of illiterates? With intensive phonics all children in the first grade, except for a very few who are severely retarded, should be independent readers.

Universities and colleges should train prospective teachers to use intensive phonics in all grades. A knowledge of phonics might be included in the suggested tests for all teachers. School boards could supply in-service training for their teachers by phonetic experts recommended by the Reading Reform Foundation. This could reduce the cost of education for the taxpayers by eliminating many of the expensive workbooks and spelling books and most of the Chapter One remedial programs.

Respectfully

Pauline E. Garnella
Pauline E. Garnella

Patricia D. Jenkins
P.O. Box 575
Buies Creek, NC 27506
March 25, 1986

The Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary
and Vocational Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

TESTIMONY RE THE ILLITERACY PROBLEM

Dear Mr. Hawkins:

Senator Zorinsky's letter informing me of your March 20 hearings on the pathetic illiteracy problem in our nation has just caught up with me where I am visiting in England. I do hope my testimony will reach you in time to be included in the record.

I am a former elementary school teacher, a graduate of the University of Michigan School of Education, a mother, and now a grandmother. Prior to 1965 I taught children from the poorest inner city schools of Detroit to the wealthiest suburbs. My husband is a professor of law, so our interest in and concern for education remains keen.

For many years we have been distressed over the obvious decline in reading, writing, spelling, grammar and vocabulary particularly evident among public school children. We recognize that people who cannot read well cannot write well. And those who cannot write well cannot think clearly, for it is the practice of putting thoughts on paper that organizes them into coherency. No one does for pleasure that which is painfully difficult. Poor readers avoid reading, thus developing stunted vocabularies. Since words are the building blocks of thinking, those with poor vocabularies then become limited thinkers, though the vast majority of poor readers or non-readers have ample native intelligence. The source of the problem lies elsewhere.

I'll not take your time to relate the seriousness of our nation's illiteracy problem. I am sure you have ample evidence of its alarming extent. The dollar cost to our nation in misguided and ineffectual remedial programs, in welfare programs and in unrealized productivity is beyond calculation. (I refer you to Michael S. Brunner at the National Institute of Education for specific statistics.) But the cost in wasted lives is even more tragic.

While the education establishment is only too happy to spend countless dollars on developing and selling an endless array of "new and improved" programs for the teaching of reading, accompanied by an army of reading consultants, counselors, psychologist, sociologist, etc., etc., they (except for a few brave isolated scholars) refuse to admit that the Look-Say method of teaching reading, is fatally flawed. They cling to it tenaciously. This is not surprising when one considers that professional egos and incomes are at stake; that book publishers have a large vested interest in controlled-vocabulary, dumbed-down textbooks; and that rare now is the teacher who knows any other way to read or to teach reading.

Teachers have had drummed into them that a true phonetic approach to teaching reading is dull, inferior, and so on. They have not been told that in every one of the 124 recorded comparison studies of Look-Say vs. Intensive Systematic Phonics no study showed Look-Say to be preferable when students were tested at third grade or beyond. True, Look-Say children may appear to get off to a fast start "reading." However, when the number of words begins to outpace their ability to memorize configuration those who do not have a natural aptitude begin to fall behind. This usually begins to show up by about the third grade. At this point the desire to read wanes as the students feel themselves drowning in a sea of meaningless print, and behavior problems increase. They are then shunted into "remedial" classes where they receive more intensive instruction, generally using the same methods that caused their problems in the first place. Is it any wonder they begin to look forward to escaping school at the first opportunity.

Many of their bewildered teachers also contemplate escape, frustrated with trying to teach classes of children who may have a range of reading ability spanning eight grades or more. Worse yet, many teachers actually believe they are teaching phonics because a smattering of phonics is scattered through the teaching guide - or a program uses the word "phonics" in its title (such as "analytical phonics," "intrinsic phonics," or "gradual phonics") to pacify while actually relying on the sight or Look-Say method. Children, not knowing what systematic phonics instruction is, insist they are getting phonics, and most parents are fooled as well.

I sympathize with those teachers and parents. I have been there. I have been the mother of a child who needlessly struggled through school. By the second grade I knew my son was in trouble. I asked that he be held back a year, but the school would not agree to this because he was tall. I tried to help him myself, but at that time I knew nothing about teaching phonics systematically. In fact, I knew nothing about teaching reading at all except what was given in the Look-Say teachers' guide. No course on the subject had been offered me at the University of Michigan. I had been fortunate enough to have learned to read phonetically myself but, in spite of my being an elementary teacher, it never occurred to me that in first and second grade my son had never been taught anything about the connection between the letters and the sounds they represent. I would tell him, "Sound it out." Because he had a hearing deficiency I assumed that was the reason he had trouble distinguishing the sounds the letters represented. He exhibited the classic symptoms of a Look-and-Guess victim. He would approach a word with eyes skipping around hunting for any clue; he rearranged letters or syllables; he guessed by context; he skipped words he couldn't read; he was a dreadful speller and, naturally, he hated writing. Homework time was battle time. It never dawned on me that he had had no phonics instruction in those vital early grades because I knew no other way to read. But for the rare exception, today's teacher knows no other way to read than Look-Say (by whatever euphemistic name it is called) and no other way to teach reading.

Last summer this now 33-year-old son and I took a course together in the Spalding "Writing Road to Reading" intensive systematic phonics approach to teaching all ~~reading~~ language skills including reading and spelling. Though Tom's hearing is worse now than when he was in school, he had no trouble catching on. And what a revelation it was to him to discover there is order to the English language - that, contrary to popular myth, only about 5% of our words deviate from the phonetic rules of spelling - and of these 5% generally only one part deviates, not the whole word. English is not the great hodge-podge it is made out to be by the "experts." It was at this time that my son said to me, "Mom, you used to tell me to sound it out, and I didn't have any idea what you were talking about. When I came to words I didn't know I'd just guess or skip over them." (How many of our school children are doing the same while we wonder why comprehension is low?) My son is now beginning to teach his 3½-year-old son the sounds of the phonograms, an exercise my grandson thinks is great fun. We hope to have him reading before he starts school so he will not be handicapped the way his father was.

What must we do to really attack our nation's illiteracy problem and avoid exercises in expensive futility?

1. It is clear we cannot rely on the professional educators to voluntarily throw out their half-century reliance on Look-Say, for "there is none so blind as those who will not see." Congress can stop wasting billions of dollars on way-out experimental programs such as fill the catalog of the Educational Diffusion Network, and start diverting some of those funds to instruct those in our colleges who teach our future teachers how intensive systematic phonics works. After all, these professors are now as much victims of Look-Say as my son. They cannot be expected to teach that which they themselves do not understand.

2. Congress must stop encouraging reading remediation by use of the same teaching methods which created our illiteracy problems in the first place. Presently we are throwing away good money after bad, guaranteeing a high failure rate and demoralization among young and old who try to get help. When 95-99% can learn to read adequately through phonics instruction it is pure folly to continue teaching with a method that has no better than about a

2. Continued.
   60-70% semi-success rate among all readers, and far less among the reading handicapped.

3. Congress can require phonetic literacy instruction before spending federal dollars on job retraining programs. What good are retraining programs for those who have never been trained and who cannot read a textbook or even the directions and warnings on their tools?

4. Congress can require phonetic literacy instruction of our federal prisoners, the vast majority of whom are severely reading-deficient, if not totally illiterate. They are, after all, a captive audience. These model programs could then be copied by the state penal authorities. Such instruction would not only be the cheapest form of rehabilitation effort, but likely the most effective in restoring self-esteem and the ability to hold an honest job when prisoners get out. Giving credit toward parole would certainly enhance motivation to learn. Armed forces semi-illiterates could also benefit from phonics instruction.

5. The House should support the Senate's bill to establish a National Commission on Illiteracy to focus upon the need

5. Continued.

for improved reading instruction in all respects, including the teaching of teachers.

There are, of course, many other things that can be done, but the above would, I believe, make a good beginning - proving that our citizens are not too stupid to learn, and that there is a better way to teach. I suspect the citizens and well-intentioned teachers could take it from there.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit my thoughts and experiences on this vital subject.

Yours very truly,

Patricia D. Jenkins

Mrs. Robert A. Jenkins

cc The Honorable Edward Zorinsky,
United States Senator

2912 North Cole Road
Boise, Idaho 83704
March 11, 1986

The Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman,
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hawkins:

I understand the House Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education will hold a hearing on causes of illiteracy with emphasis on the methods of teaching reading.

As a retired reading consultant and teacher at all levels, including college graduate courses for teachers, I should like to emphasize the need for an in-depth study of the teacher education program. We continually blame teachers for illiteracy when it is the college education departments that should be held accountable. Teachers should not be blamed when they have not been taught. Our teachers' colleges (in so many cases) fail to teach phonics. I was not taught phonics when I was earning my Masters in Elementary Reading Education. Phonics was mentioned incidentally as one approach. Without a strong emphasis on letters, their sounds, and then blending those sounds to form a word, children are lost when trying to decode unfamiliar words.

I read where ten thousand teachers in Texas will probably fail the Teachers' Literacy Test given in that state. Isn't it because they were not given the proper training in their respective teachers' colleges?

I hope you will use this letter to emphasize the need for preventive methods in teaching. Millions of dollars would be saved for remediation if we could prevent the problems in the first place.

Very truly yours,

Minnie R. Thomas

Minnie R. Thomas
Retired Reading Consultant
and former Trustee of the
Boise Independent School
District

cc: Senator Edward Zorinsky

March 13, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and
Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D. C. 20515

Honorable Sir:

This letter is to be considered my endorsement of Senator Edward Zorinsky's bill to establish a National Commission of Illiteracy, which I understand will be under discussion on March 20. Please include it in the record of this hearing.

As I have written Senator Zorinsky, our family is presently into the second generation of non-readers, due, I believe, to the "new" method of teaching. I can't believe that non-readers were just an unknown quantity when the "phonics" method was in use.

Recently I went with a group of Church Women United to visit our Alameda County Juvenile Hall. The case worker giving us the tour offered the information that most of the boys at the facility were poor readers. The fact that they ended up there undoubtedly is related to their poor self-image brought on by educators putting them down, when, in my opinion, it is the educators that are letting our whole nation's kids down by not providing them with a learning experience they can handle.

It is my hope that you and the other members of your committee will support Senator Zorinsky's legislation.

Yours truly,

Velma M. Harreschou

Mrs. Robert C. Harreschou
1782 Via Redondo
San Lorenzo, Ca. 94580

cc: Senator Zorinsky

11215 Thompson Avenue
Reisterstown, Maryland
21136
March 12, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary & Vocational Education
House of Representatives, Room B 346 C Rayburn Bg.
Washington, D. C. 20515

Below
RE: Testimony to be included in the record of
the March 20, 1986 Illiteracy Hearing.

Dear Mr. Hawkins:

Senator Edward Zorinsky has the interest of this country and its citizens at heart and I trust you and your committee will support his legislation on illiteracy.

In 1945 I first became electrified to a tremendous lack in our educational system when a business executive complained that the kids just out of highschool applying for work in his insurance firm couldn't spell, couldn't read, couldn't add -- really knew LESS than nothing. He was absolutely disgusted. Since that time I have accumulated a considerable amount of generalized experience and historical knowledge of what lead up to that executive's consternation.

It seems that in the 1930s the "Look-Say" method of teaching reading supplanted the phonic system and that began our slide into illiteracy because, as one well-known educator states, imposing a hieroglyphic reading system (Look-Say) on a sound-symbol writing system can cause associational confusion, dyslexia, strephosymbolia and other reading disabilities. This "Look-Say" system was originally concocted for the deaf and dumb in the 1830s but was discarded by them and rejuvinated in the 1930s to be foisted on our normal children. Look-Say was exposed in 1955 by "Why Johnny Can't Read" and again in 1981 by "Why Johnny STILL Can't Read." I might also mention the admirable work of Dr. Maria Montessori, the Italian Educator who used the phonic system with such explosive success for even her retarded students. The good Doctor and her philosophy however were over-ridden in the early 1900s by Dewey and his objective of socializing the child.

"There are only two lasting gifts we can give to our children. One is roots--the other, wings." We need the roots of "Phonics First" so that minds can grow the WINGS to think for themselves. Please give heart-felt consideration to the above facts and to the many potential or already intellectually stunted individuals whose lives you will affect by the legislation you enact.

Sincerely,

Margaret R. Tinkler

Margaret Resh Tinkler

cc: Senator Zorinsky

RR 1
Emerson, Iowa 51533
March 16, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins
Chairman, Subcommittee on Elementary,
Secondary, and Vocational Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Representative Hawkins:

Please enter my testimony into the record of the hearing on illiteracy to be held March 20, 1986. I urge your support of Senator Edward Zorinsky's bill to establish a National Commission on Illiteracy. Thank you.

Yours truly,

Kathy Lunn

Kathy Lunn

enc.
cc: Sen. Edward Zorinsky

March 16, 1986

Members of the House Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education.

Five years ago, because of my growing awareness of the inadequacies of our public school system, I became involved in a movement to try to change local school policy and programs. The following are two letters sent to the local paper concerning my feelings on education. I would like to enter these in the records of this hearing.

Dear Editor:

When I was in school years ago (20), the school was also more than the basics. We had kids with problems at home, but they were not allowed to use this as an excuse not to learn. The teachers and administrators were kind, understanding and helpful, but learning was foremost.

School lunch was delicious and nutritious. No junk food or snacks were furnished by the school.

The teacher was always sympathetic to a sore finger or alarmed at a broken bone.

We were taught our values at home but the school was expected to also keep the morals high, to expect manners and to teach respect for others.

No one minded delivering a message or even letting the child call home if necessary.

Everyone was glad to organize a sporting event or a dance because the whole community got involved and excited about it.

As far as being policed, we had a thing called discipline. They knew where we were supposed to be at all times and if we weren't there they certainly would find out why. At study time in the classroom silence was demanded to make the best environment possible for concentration. There were rules, and if caught breaking one, you would receive the consequences no matter who you were. However much punishment was done at school you got twice as much at home. The punishment was usually fair and the parents had no reason to complain about it.

There didn't seem to be as many emotionally handicapped, educationally handicapped, slow, or fast students. Maybe they weren't so ready back then to categorize a child. The parents, also, weren't so anxious to admit or believe that if their child didn't learn that he was either sick or his memory span was too short to retain what was learned.

If a child did not do well he got a bad grade (maybe even an F) so a parent would know and could help do something about it. Papers, including tests, were sent home so Mom and Dad could follow the progress of their kids.

The teachers and parents expected a child to keep up with the class and if he didn't, a little more time was spent on explaining the problem or making a lazy child work. They did not let the student cop out by letting him slow down to a pace that was enjoyable and easier but not necessarily best for learning. The smarter or faster ones were given assignments to dig deeper into the subjects, do reports, or do more problems to keep them busy and learning.

Teachers demanded and earned respect from students and parents. They were gladly given this because everyone knew the responsibility and difficulty of their job. They also would help to weed out the incompetent teacher, knowing that he or she would reflect on them.

Subjects were put in the school to aid the child in the learning process and to prepare them for life. They were not put in just to make the school look like it offered so much. The curriculum was set up to aid the student NOT to make an administrator look good in the eyes of his peers.

TEACHERS! Let us help to get things back the way they were. Changing methods and texts constantly and spending more money is not necessarily progress. Being an adult is learning from our mistakes. Maybe if we quit blaming each other for the problems we can do what we both want.

There are parents out here that want to help you no matter what obstacles you have to overcome. We must let a teacher teach the way he or she knows will work. Let's get politics out of the school and put learning before anything.

In answer to Mr. Monroe's question, "What do we expect from the school?" I say a good education without a lot of excuses for not getting it. Anything less is an insult to the teacher and an injustice to our children.

(3)

Dear Editor:

I would like to explain, for the benefit of those who do not quite understand, the difference between a phonics-first program (Lippincott) and an eclectic or look-say method such as the Ginn series we now employ.

As Mr. Wolski reported, the Lippincott program starts with the short vowels and a few consonant sounds. When learned, these sounds enable the child to decode (sound out) 62 percent of all words. The Lippincott program teaches most of the phonics elements from K through third grades. A child reads independently sooner, which leaves fourth through sixth grade to perfect his reading and comprehension skills. As evidenced by comparing the Ginn and Lippincott books, we see a much larger reading vocabulary by sixth grade with the Lippincott program.

Now, to try and explain our Ginn reading program: Realizing that most parents are conscious of the need to teach phonics, the Ginn Co. has provided some of the elements, therefore making it difficult to see the difference. This is the reason that when you go to conference the teacher will undoubtedly say "We Do Teach Phonics." As I said before, the short vowels and a few consonants enable a child to decode 62 percent of the words; however, with Ginn a child is expected to start out reading words such as "duck" and "park" long before an explanation of these variations are given. This means these words must be memorized in order for the child to read them. If each letter were taught as a phonetic unit it would be possible to read them without memorization.

Individual vowel sounds are not stressed even though taught. The blending (putting these sounds together) is not concentrated on in the early grades. Prefixes, such as "ex", that would be taught early in the phonics program, are not taught to the student until fifth grade with Ginn. Phonics instruction goes all the way through sixth grade with the Ginn series, way beyond the age a child should be an independent reader. We are told by Ginn that a child cannot read a word unless he knows the beginning and ending sounds. These are dwelled upon in early instruction, but the middles (vowels) often seem to be forgotten. Although the phonic elements have been sprinkled sporadically through seven grades, memorization of whole words is the key to this series.

I have been told by educators that a phonics first program is too difficult and boring for a small child; that all words are not phonetic; that children must read first before they learn the sounds; and that this method can never work. I have observed children of varying ages being taught phonics first. Never did I hear a child say that it was too hard. They just got to work and did it. All words are not phonetic but these are fewer in number than most people believe. A few sight words are learned everyday, but the majority of words can be decoded. If we adopt this Lippincott series the children could be reading short sentences by the middle of their kindergarten year which is certainly much sooner than they do now.

I have seen a phonics-first program work. It has helped kids seemingly lost in our present system. I have also seen five-year-olds that are starting to read and enjoying it. The rules are learned and built upon systematically. It is work, but the rewards are great. Let's not sell the children short. They are willing to work if they can see the results.

As many studies have shown, if a child's interest in reading isn't cultivated early he may well be turned off forever. With one-third of our second graders scoring 35 percent or below in the basic skills and Gates Reading Tests, it seems apparent to me that our Ginn program is not working. Let's look for something better.

Even though there is much evidence that changes need to be made in our public schools, no amount of letters or logic seems to make any difference. Parents are at the mercy of an institution that seems to ignore the wants of the very people that pay the bills and have the children. Please support Senator Zorinsky's bill to establish a National Commission on Illiteracy.

Kathy Lunn

Kathy Lunn
Emerson, Iowa 51533

PLEASE INCLUDE THIS LETTER IN THE RECORD OF THE ILLITERACY HEARING, MARCH 20, 1986

688 Eleventh Avenue NW
New Brighton, MN 55112 (612 636-5761)
March 20, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346C Rayburn building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Hawkins:

Please support Senator Edward Zorinsky's National Commission on Illiteracy Act. As the mother of 6 children I assure you this act is sorely needed. My husband and I teach our children at home so that we will be certain that our children will know how to read and will, in fact, read.

The publishers of the large basal sight-word readers believe that the English language is disorganized and difficult to learn and to teach. Many educators firmly believe that there are a percentage of children who are unable to learn to read. What is astonishing is that any children can learn to read under such circumstances.

We must let parents and classroom teachers know that phonics-first is the secret to producing readers. I do no know of anything more important to the future of our country than pulling ourselves out of the illiteracy pit we have dug. Poor children can learn to read; children of broken homes can learn to read; all children can learn to read!

Please support Senator Zorinsky and let's get moving.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Ellen Loegering

Ellen Loegering (Mrs. Kenneth)
A Home Schooling Mother

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The Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins
Chairman, Subcommittee on Elementary,
Secondary, and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Hawkins:

As a former high school and college teacher, as a parent, and as an education writer, I have been a close observer of our public schools for more than 25 years. Research for my recent book Schoolwise, a handbook to help parents deal with children's school problems, put me in touch with scores of parents, teachers, administrators, and education researchers across the United States.

I am pleased that the Congress is conducting hearings on the problem of illiteracy, which results in a life of frustration for a growing number of adults in this nation. The one third of our adult population which is totally or functionally illiterate is more likely to need welfare and more likely to be involved in crime than are adults who can read. Because we have compulsory schooling, the vast majority of our adult illiterates have spent at least eight years in the classroom. A large number have high school diplomas. Illiteracy is therefore an educational problem before it becomes a social problem. While I agree that we must make every effort to help adult illiterates learn to read, it is also essential that we find out why the illiterate adults who now need our help were not taught to read in school.

Lack of money is not the answer. We lead the developed nations in the proportion of our national resources devoted to education, as well as in the proportion of adult illiterates in our society. Two million illiterate young adults emerge from our schools each year.

Reading is the number one problem in U.S. education today--at all levels of schooling and in all types of communities. An untold number of children leave elementary school with such poor reading skills that they require what a spokesperson for the Council for Basic Education has called "dumbed down" textbooks in junior high and high school. During the past fifteen years public schools serving all types of communities have asked publishers for easier books in all academic subjects.

A history teacher in a suburban public high school cited as being one of the 79 best in the United States complained to me that when teachers were granted sabbaticals in his school they were urged to take courses in teaching reading, rather than in their subject areas. Reading problems are not confined to the inner city.

College students are also handicapped by inadequate reading skills. I began teaching undergraduate writing courses in a Big Ten university twenty years after I graduated from college. I was shocked to find that the textbook for the course, designed for average freshmen and sophomores, was written at a level once considered appropriate for sixth grade. My students had difficulty reading samples of writing by authors which used to be considered standard fare for college undergraduates. A number also had problems understanding ordinary newspaper editorials. Instead of assigning this material as homework, I often found it necessary to lead students through these readings paragraph by paragraph. My students came from middle class homes and many had been educated in public schools considered to be better than average.

Are children in the United States less capable of learning to read than are European or Asian children? Are today's children less intelligent than students attending U.S. schools thirty or forty years ago? Common sense and other evidence (including the need to revise the average score upward on a widely used intelligence test in 1972) tells us the answer to both questions is "no."

Why, then, do two million more illiterate young adults emerge from our schools each year? Why are millions of children said to be "learning disabled" in reading, despite the lack of any scientifically valid test for identifying this mysterious malady? Why do average children from good homes need easier textbooks than their parents and grandparents used?

Educators often say that if children have difficulty learning to read it is because they come from homes where parents are illiterate or do not take the time to read to them. Educators have convinced many in the media and many citizens and legislators, as well, that uncaring parents and poor environment cause the illiteracy and other reading problems so prevalent in our nation's public schools. Yet I have heard complaints from scores of parents in all parts of the United States who are themselves avid readers, parents who have diligently read to their children at home; still, their children have developed serious reading problems. Conversely, studies have shown that a number of inner city public schools in Houston, New York, and Philadelphia, have achieved a success rate of 80% in teaching reading and other basic skills to poor and minority children, regardless of their home life and other out-of-school factors.

Given this evidence, we should not continue to accept the proposition that lack of ability on the part of American children, or poverty, or undesirable home life are to blame for this nation's shameful illiteracy. Instead, we should ask why some inner city public schools have a high rate of success in teaching poor, minority children to read, while in other public schools serving the same types of children, as many as 70% of the students are reading one or more years below grade level and 40% are reading two or more years below grade level.

The primary difference between these two groups of schools is in the method used to teach reading. In the successful schools teachers use direct phonics (also called "code emphasis," "intensive phonics," "phonics first," or "synthetic phonics"). In the other schools, teachers use indirect phonics (also called "meaning emphasis," "eclectic," "psycholinguistic," or "analytic phonics").

It is important to understand the differences between these two methods of reading instruction. In direct teaching of phonics, children learn at the very beginning--before they read stories--the sounds of printed letters and letter combinations and how to pronounce words made up of these sounds. They learn these sounds systematically. For example: consonant sounds (p,t,k, etc.) short vowel sounds (e as in "wet," a as in "bat"), long vowel sounds (i as in "fire"), and so on. Once they begin reading stories, they are able to tackle new words by sounding them out (decoding).

In indirect phonics, the teaching of sounds is not deliberate and systematic. Children are taught letter sounds only after they are taught to guess at the meanings of words by their shape or by their use in a sentence and to memorize lists of so-called "sight words." Instead of teaching all the letter sounds when children first begin learning to read, the indirect phonics method spreads the teaching of letter sounds over several years. Because indirect phonics requires so much word memorization and guessing, many children become frustrated, inadequate readers. At worst they leave school functionally illiterate--unable to use a phone book or read a medicine label. Other children have difficulty learning science or social studies because they can't understand the textbooks. Still others taught by indirect phonics find reading such a disagreeable task that they avoid all reading not required for school work.

More than 100 research studies have shown that direct phonics is superior to indirect phonics with its heavy reliance on word guessing and memorization. Dr. Jeanne Chall of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education and author of Learning to Read: The Great Debate, updated edition (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1983), states that all children learn to read better if they are taught direct phonics.

Despite this overwhelming evidence in favor of the direct phonics method, it is used by only 15% of public schools in the United States. The other 85% use indirect phonics, the method proven to be less effective. Because indirect phonics stresses the look-say techniques of word memorization and guessing, rather than teaching children to sound out words, it is justly called "phony phonics." Unfortunately, the public is unaware of the vital differences between phony phonics and real (direct) phonics teaching. When parents, journalists, or legislators ask the people in charge of our public schools how they teach reading, they almost invariably answer, "We use phonics." In all but 15% of the cases, these school people are actually referring to phony phonics.

Children of all abilities in all types of communities throughout the United States are the losers in this confusion about reading methods. Inner city and minority children are usually the biggest losers when schools use the wrong teaching method. While middle class parents may be able to provide tutors for children who have reading problems, or may succeed in getting the school to provide special help, poor parents can't afford tutors, and they may lack the self-assurance necessary to get special help from the school. Despite misteaching of reading, middle class children often learn to read well enough to get by, while poor children often do not.

If the vast majority of our children, regardless of background, are capable of learning to read, and if research has proved that direct phonics works best, why do only 15% of our public school primary teachers use this method of reading instruction? Our teachers do not use direct phonics in teaching children to read because they themselves have not been trained to use this method. Despite the research evidence that direct phonics is the best reading method, despite our growing illiteracy problem, our colleges of education continue to train prospective teachers and curriculum planners to use indirect phonics--teaching children to memorize and guess, with only a smattering of phonics.

We can't blame teachers for poor reading instruction. Their college professors and the school district curriculum specialist tell them to use indirect phonics. The curriculum specialist also chooses the reading books. Not surprisingly, the books are based on the indirect phonics mehtod. Like the general public, most teachers are not aware of the difference between this phony phonics and real phonics instruction. Many work very hard, unaware that they are using the wrong method. Occasionally they get fed up with the poor results of their efforts and look for a better method on their own. After they have had training in direct phonics, I've heard a number of these teachers exclaim, "Before I took this course I thought I was really teaching phonics all along!" One teacher who switched to direct phonics after having used the other method for many years said: "We did nothing but sounds until December. Then we flew through the first few readers. I loved it! Every teacher [in other grades] in the school could spot the students who had been in those classes, they read so well."

An overview of the research and my interviews with parents, teachers, and leading education specialists has convinced me that we have all the ingredients necessary to prevent illiteracy and the other reading problems which stand in the way of real reform in education:

1. Our spending for education is adequate.

2. The vast majority of our children in all types of communities are capable of learning to read in regular classrooms.

3. We have more than 100 research studies which point to direct phonics as the best method of teaching reading to all children.

4. Our primary teachers want to do a good job of teaching children to read. All they need is the correct method.

5. Parents care about their children's reading. When children have reading problems, parents who can afford it get help from private tutoring services. If parents were not concerned, tutoring would not be a growing business. Poor and minority parents try to get their children into those few inner city public schools which teach reading successfully. Some struggle to send their children to city parochial schools or to private schools operating on a shoestring, where teachers use the direct phonics reading method.

6. Children want to learn. Every one of those millions of adult illiterates was once a first-grader eager to learn to read. We should blame the teaching method--not the child or the adult who can't read.

Why, when we have the necessary ingredients to teach children to read, do public schools still fail to do so, and instead add two million adult illiterates to our population each year? The evidence strongly suggests that the primary reason for illiteracy and our other serious reading problems is that our colleges of education promote ineffective classroom methods and fail to train prospective teachers to use direct phonics. Worse, education professors tell future teachers that if children are taught direct phonics they will be "word callers," unable to understand what they read. I heard this argument against direct phonics from nearly every primary teacher I interviewed. Yet the foremost researchers in reading all say that this argument is false. Dr. Chall quotes a study which states: "We have yet to encounter a student who could decode [sound out words] fluently but failed to comprehend." Decoding is what children learn to do with direct phonics.

While I do not suggest that this committee ignore the need to treat the symptoms of the reading problem by helping illiterate adults, I believe it should also give major attention to the prevention of illiteracy. It is far easier and less expensive to teach children to read correctly in the first place than it is to remedy the problem by teaching illiterate adults after they have experienced the frustration of trying to function without reading skills in our society.

I wholeheartedly support Senator Edward Zorinsky's proposal for a National Commission on Illiteracy, which would focus on preventing illiteracy. Please include my testimony in the record of the illiteracy hearing scheduled for March 20, 1986.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my views.

Sincerely,

Martha C. Brown

Martha Cluverius Brown

copy: Senator Edward Zorinsky

2457 E. Grand Blanc Rd.
Grand Blanc, Michigan 48439
March 18, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Sir:

Attached is testimony in regard to my reactions and views concerning the problems of illiteracy in the United States. These views are arrived at as the result of more than thirty years of experience in the teaching of English at the secondary level in Michigan public schools.

I should appreciate this testimony being included in the record of the illiteracy hearing of March 20, 1986, before the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education.

Sincerely,

Carol Applegate

Carol Applegate (Mrs. John)

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF LEGISLATION TO ADDRESS THE CAUSES AND PREVENTION OF ILLITERACY

Submitted to the Subcommittee on
Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education
by Carol Applegate, of Grand Blanc, Michigan

Information concerning illiteracy in the United States continues to shock and disturb, both because of the enormity of the problem and because the number of those who must be classified as illiterate continues to increase in spite of the vast amount of money and time spent in remedial instruction at every level. It should be obvious that remediation is not the answer; the problem of illiteracy must be addressed by methods that will prevent it, rather than waiting for the time when those who are illiterate cry out for remedy and there is no remedy.

As a teacher of high school English for more than thirty years I have seen the unfortunate and sad results of unsolved elementary school reading problems addressed by a series of quite ineffective remedial reading classes set up at every grade level, with students moving from one such class to another -- and finally becoming high school graduates, still unable to read well enough to function successfully in the adult world. This is a travesty of education. By allowing students to progress from one grade to another without having mastered the English language we are allowing them to think they have a high school education when, in fact, they are not educated at all.

The high school diploma has lost its significance, and certainly its integrity. Every high school student who is graduated without having become capable of reading at a functional level becomes another statistic in the count of illiterate and, often, unemployable, adults. Add to this the students who do not learn to read and drop out of high school before graduation, and tomorrow's count of American illiterates increases dramatically.

Tomorrow's illiterate adults are in school today. If American public schools continue to award credits and diplomas for little more than attendance, we will continue to have an adult population with an unconscionably high rate of illiteracy. Tomorrow's illiteracy must be prevented where it begins -- in the elementary schools where the ability to read begins, and in the secondary schools where that ability should be used and improved.

"Help an adult to read" programs are commendable. However, the problem of illiteracy will never be removed in America if school children are allowed to move through the public school system from one remedial reading class to another. Public education must require a functional literacy of every student who finishes elementary school. It is only through a rigid, definite, clearly defined requirement of mastery of the English language that adult illiteracy will be lessened. The problem must be prevented, not remediated. This can only happen when and if demonstrable literacy supersedes all other class and course requirements in American public schools. It ought to be unthinkable, and unnecessary, for colleges and businesses to provide classes to teach adults to read. Reading is a skill to be acquired in childhood, and to be used, and enjoyed, for the rest of one's lifetime.

I urge this committee to address the problem of illiteracy through steps taken to prevent it. I commend to your consideration the legislation introduced by Senator Edward Zorinsky as S. J. Resolution 102 on April 3, 1985, to establish a National Commission on Illiteracy. This resolution speaks eloquently to the problem of preventing illiteracy rather than attempting to remediate it. It is this concept of prevention of the problem that must be addressed if illiteracy is ever to be removed from the educational, governmental, business, and personal areas of American life.

March 16, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins
Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary,
and Vocational Education
U.S. House of Representatives
Room B 346 C
Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Hawkins:

I am writing to you to express my support for the National Commission of Illiteracy Act sponsored by the Honorable Senator Edward Zorinsky. I am asking that you include the following information in the record of the illiteracy hearing scheduled for March 20, 1986.

First of all, I refer you to the recent national report of reading -Becoming a Nation of Readers I particularly direct your attention to the **Afterword** written by Dr. Jeanne Chall. The bulk of this report focuses on reading methods that are successful with the mythical "average" reader, but only in the final portion of the report will you see the question of the "disabled reader" treated. Please take it seriously. No nation can afford to ignore 15 to 20% of its population.

This report makes a number of recommendations that your committee should take a look at before making any decisions. One word of caution, if a student has not made the shift from **learning to read, to reading to learn**, he should not be removed from instruction in learning to read. Once a student falls behind, it is impossible to catch up and keep up simultaneously.

Dr. Laurence Lieberman, a private consultant on the east coast, has said that special education can only be as good as regular education allows it to be. In other words, I believe he is saying that the better trained regular classroom teachers are in dealing with the diversity of students abilities, and the better trained those same teachers are in multiple methods of teaching reading, the lower will be the numbers of children "identified" and only the most severely handicapped will require the services of special education teachers.

These regular teachers need to be knowledgeable of and skilled in teaching all the reading skills pre-requisite to the grade level they are teaching. Such training would permit them to know immediately which skills a child is missing, the instruction the child requires, and the appropriate learning channels and methods necessary for learning to take place. Eighty percent of the children learn with the indirect methods that pervail in the schools, the rest need "direct" instructional methods.

Children should not have to wait for a criterion of failure before they are eligible for specialized instruction. Send some of your committee members to look at a program in the Bloomington, Minnesota public schools called Project Read. The professionals to contact there are Dr. Mary Lee Enfield and Victoria Green. I believe you'll be most pleasantly surprised at what's achieveable in the regular classroom! This program is a classroom adaptation of a multi-sensory, systematic phonics approach to the teaching of reading, writing, and spelling. It does not exclude the teaching of comprehension as some reading experts claim. Many of the criticisms of phonics-based programs set up false dichotomies.

The current levels of sophistication reached by educational researchers are better able to measure the appropriateness of various reading methods for the diverse populations that attend this nations schools. In the past we have quite literally discarded total reading methods when we should have been keeping the best of each.

Most teachers entered teaching because they loved school, and school was easy for them. It is little wonder then that they do not understand what to do when children fail to learn to read using the "traditional" methods of instruction "taught" in our colleges and universities. If the "basal" approach works with 28 out of 30 children in a classroom, why suspect the failure lies anywhere save with the child?

Our colleges have not been designed to teach provide prospective teachers with "practicum based" training in multiple methods of teaching reading. It is only when one pursues an advanced degree, or attends a quality inservice that one is even exposed to alternative teaching methods. Only when a teacher is motivated to treat student failure as a challenge and seek methods that do work, is there hope to eliminate illiteracy.

Dr. Benjamin Bloom at the University of Chicago is working on the identification of methods of classroom instruction that will produce the level of achievement afforded by one-to-one tutoring. Many parents send their children to private schools that offer special, individualized programs employing direct, clinical teaching methods to salvage "good minds".

The organization of the schools is inadequate to provide "appropriate instruction in the least restrictive environment". Some students require one-to-one instruction before they are ready to work in small groups, and the public schools are not able to provide that kind of instructional opportunity. I believe this could be achieveable if 100% literacy was the goal, but that is not going to happen when school districts are more concerned with securing an "all-weather track" than improving the literacy rate! Too many administrators sincerely believe it's athletics that keep kids in school, not success in the tasks we ask them to perform. While I would not argue that it is important for kids to develop skill in activities that have obvious social merit, being able to read adequately is imperative as success in 90% of all school subjects beyond grade 4 depends on one's ability to read independently and understand what is read!

In addition to having taught in three different school districts or varying sizes in Nebraska, I am now teaching part time at a small private college while completing an Ed.D. degree at a local university. I am dismayed to be told that if one plans to teach in an Ivy League, Big 10, or Big 8 school, one should teach only well enough to "keep the department off your back"! Promotion and tenure in colleges and universities is based on **research** and there won't be time to publish the amount required for promotion if one spends too much time preparing for classes, teaching, or working individually with students. Now, if that is the case, is it any wonder that we're not getting teachers in the schools who have more knowledge than just a "basal" approach to reading?

This is only a brief sketch of the difficulties involved in the "literacy issue", but the problem can be dealt with effectively if there is leadership in this area.

To borrow the slogan of the United Negro College Fund, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste!"

Please support Senator Zorinsky's legislation!

Sincerely,

Joan Mencke Stoner
6301 Roca Road
Roca, Nebraska 68430

Mrs. Lloyd Bauer, HCR1, Box 81, Menominee, Michigan 49858

March 11, 1986

The Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, & Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

In Re: National Commission on Illiteracy
by: The Honorable Edward Zorinsky

March 20th Hearing Testimony

Dear Representative Hawkins:

"Your children will have to take a reading readiness test before they can enter school", the principal informed us. The test had nothing to do with a child's ability to read. Two of our children could already read before entering this test. It was a financial test of the family to determine which 'group' to place the child.

The Kindergarten teacher said: "Do not teach your children the alphabet and sounds, the way you learned to read. We have a new 'scientific' method which works much better." When we asked who the scientists were and where did they invent this method, she would not reply.

The boys would come home, go to their rooms and cry until they fell asleep. They refused to eat dinner. At the time I could not walk, so My mother called the teacher: "What is wrong?" The teacher insisted everything was just fine; that the boys were doing very well in school.

Vernon Keller, a veteranlosta leg in service; let me borrow his extra pair of crutches. Against the doctor's orders, I was determined to find out what was going on in their classroom:

Seated before me were eleven of the most heartbroken, miserable, humiliated boys I had ever seen. They were seated one behind the other in a long row. Before them were empty desks. They had no books or educational material of any kind. The paper, pencils, etc. we had given them were locked up!

To their right was a long wall covered with black chalkboard, completely bare. It was not used. There was nothing for them to look at. Their hands were empty. There were no bookshelves, magazine racks anywhere in the room. There was nothing for them to do!

To their left were four rows of empty desks and chairs. To the left of empty furniture, sat another row of children, ten girls and two boys, alongside of huge windows. Each child is this row held a books in his or her hands. One could see papers, books, workbooks, art paper peeking out of their desks. They had pencils, pens, crayons.

Directly in front of this row of fortunate children with books was the teacher sitting at her desk which was placed squarely in front of the lucky children. Every time she looked up ~~she faced~~

way she looked directly at the favored children, oblivious to the bookless boys on the distant side of theroom. When the teacher stood up, she deliberately turned her back in the most discourteous stance to the bookless children. She did not have to say one word to indicate the bookless tots were to be subjected to discrimination and humiliation as social outcasts. Her actions said it for her.

Why is this so? It is not a matter of skin color as all the children are white. It could not be religious prejudice as the children represented various faiths.

Mr. Martin Mayer explained it best in his book: "THE SCHOOLS", Harper and Brothers, 1961., Page 171: "First grade grade grouping is on the basis of 'reading readines'...taking by those who are not in the group with the teacher is firmly opposed as 'undemocratic'." This rule applies to the second, third grades and throughout their school lives.

The children along the windows were taking their turns at a reading lesson. Kay read a few words, stopped, pursed her lips to sound out the word. Quickly the teacher stuck a pencil between Kay's teeth and ordered her to hold it there while she studied the word, with "we'll have none of that nonsense here!" Kay spit the pencil out with "that tastes terrible!"

It was Pat's turn to read. "This stuff?" and flatly refused. (His parents had to hire a tutor to teach him to read.)

The luckless boys could hear their friends attempts at reading. They could imagine what the story was all about, but they were not allowed to peek at a single page.

How would you like to be six years old, ostracized, shut off from your friends by a wall of empty furniture?

Teachers insist they are "professional educators" while they are against education.

I turned back to the boys without books. The first boy in the row was Billy. He stared at the ceiling. I looked up. All I saw was a light green ceiling with cracks.

Issac, the boy behind Billy, was in tears which he tried to hide by hanging his head.

Benny, the third boy, obviously wanted to go to the restroom. He had his hand raised for attention the full hour I was there. Not once did the teacher glance in his direction or acknowledge he existed.

Tim the fourth boy, was our own. He was twisting and turning his handkerchief every which way. I studied his face and my heart cried.

A glance at the fifth boy, Frank, revealed that he too was miserable. Whoever inventedthis despicable readiness theory should be tarred and feathered for causing so much misery.

Walter, the sixth bookless boy was tying and untying his shoes.

The seventh boy, Tom, our son, is a twin brother to Tim. He looked so thoroughly disgusted with this discriminatory action that he would have bolted and run if he could get away with it. His resentment was showing.

Eddie, the eighth bookless boy was trying to pull his chair apart which was bolted down to the floor. He'd tug and pull and then pull some more, but it did not come loose. Then he started on the empty desk before him and kept at it until it wiggled loose and he could shake it. Not once did the teacher glance in his direction, or say one word to him. (Our teacher had 88 children in one room , K-8th grade. She would stop anyone trying to break and furniture. We all had books. All could read. A handicap was no excuse for not learning.)

Alan, the ninth bookless boy, had his thumb and forefinger on the tip of his shirt collar which he twisted back and forth.

The tenth bookless boy, Roger, had been crying but he tried to be a man about it, and was struggling to stop. He'd close his eyes tight for awhile; then he seemed to relax them; then he'd open them wide, blinking his lashes as fast as he could. His fists were clenched. His back was tense. His legs were rigid as a corpse. How would you like to suffer this way?

Neal, the eleventh boy, was a real clown. He was the last boy in the bookless row. He would stand up, look directly at the teacher, make funny faces, roll his eyes,sway his body back and forth, wave his arms in the air...anything to get teacher's attention. Neal cried out: "I want a book too ! Please give me a book! " "Why can't I have a book when I can already read?" He failed to obtain any attention from the teacher. This rude teacher must have have a heart of stone; her ears - deaf; her eyes - blind.

Later Neal became a problem in school because of his unruly behavior. All he needed was some kind attention, a few books and the opportunity to learn.

At the age of 18, Neal was dead,playing "chicken" on the highway. Why should he obey laws? When he did obey and stayed in the classroom victimized by abuse, he was rewarded with cruelness. He had been deliberately held back from learning. Murderers do not all carry guns. Some stand before a classroom of tots, turning their backs on the ones they wish to eliminate.

As you know "reading readiness" was invented to protect the look-say reading method which failed to teach reading. Most of all, it shows us:

THE so-called "educators" DO NOT WANT every child to read ! They have committed TREASON!

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Lloyd Bauer
Mrs. Lloyd Bauer

Copy The Honorable Edward Zorinsky
Senator from Nebraska

MAR 18 1986

March 12, 1986

Honorable Agustus F. Hawkins, Chairman,
Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Hawkins,

I am deeply concerned about the illiteracy problem in America which causes an unnecessary burden on all taxpayers both directly and indirectly. Directly because of money which has not been well spent, and indirectly because of the great number of persons on welfare and in prisons because of illiteracy.

Remedial measures for illiteracy is spending good money after bad, which would not be necessary if preventative measures were used to begin with.

For example, remedial measures are being used in our local vocational school. One full-time instructor and one part-time instructor have been hired to instruct students in remedial basic skills in english and math, in order for them to qualify for vocational training. These students are non-Special Ed. students who range in ages from 18 to 50 and who have been referred to the basic skills instructors by the vocational instructors.

Also, two full-time instructors teach Special Ed. students who are still in high school but are not fully qualified for vocational training.

Another half-time instructor instructs persons to prepare them for GED testing.

Much of the training listed above would not be necessary if preventative measures had been used.

As you know according to the legislation on illiteracy, the Army alone spends large amounts of money just to bring recruits up to ninth grade level...and these recruits are high school graduates.

Regarding the reading problems in the schools, Samuel Bloomenfeld, in his book NEA Trojan Horse In Education, said that many children who are labeled "dyslexia", are not. They have reading disabilities, he says, because of the Look-Say method. He claims that many reading disabilities can be reversed almost overnight by teaching Phonics.

It is shocking to note the direction that many are trying to take our schools. Some teachers call themselves "change agents" and seem to be spending too much time acting as "therapists"...doing Role Playing (asking young children to decide who is of the least value to society); Values Clarification (encouraging young children to choose their own values free from the authority of their parents and the church); and Situation Ethics (telling children that it is tactless not to lie in some situations). Please see Child Abuse In The Classroom by Phyllis Schlafly, and What Are They Teaching Our Children by Mel and Norma Gabler.

March 12, 1986
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Not only are there those who would deter the schcols from their primary purpose of teaching Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic by putting Teen Health Clinics in the schools, but there are those who would spend taxpayers' money by putting Day Care Centers in the schools. Teachers are hired to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic. That is where I want my tax money to be spent, and I know many parents who would agree.

The results prove the wisdom of the act, and we are now seeing the results of the education process in the form of illiteracy. Something must be done to correct this problem.

I support Senator Zorinsky's legislation on illiteracy, and I request that the members of the Committee support this legislation also.

Please include this letter in the record of the illiteracy hearing on March 20.

I will appreciate your consideration in this vital matter.

Sincerely,

Thelma L. Cumby

Thelma L. Cumby
234 Del Monte Ave.
Tacoma, WA 98466

1805 Parker Circle, Apt. F
Norfolk, Nebraska 68701
March 24, 1986

The Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Sir:

Would you please include this letter and the enclosed letter of Vivian S. Saunders in the record of the hearing on illiteracy that was held on March 20, 1986.

I am writing to ask you and the other members of the Subcommittee to support the National Commission on Illiteracy Act proposed by Senator Edward Zorinsky. The purpose of the Act is to supply teachers and parents with authoritative information about successful and unsuccessful methods of teaching beginning reading. Such information is badly needed, because the method now used in most schools, known as the look and say, whole word, or sight method, is simply not working.

I am not an expert on the teaching of beginning reading, but I have experience in working with poor readers and functional illiterates and some education in languages and writing systems. For six years I taught Latin and humanities at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. There were many poor readers among my students. It would be an exaggeration to call them functional illiterates, but they certainly did not read English with ease. An unfamiliar word would stop them cold, because they had no idea how to sound it out. They were poor spellers, and, as far as I could tell, never read for pleasure. They could read well enough to get into college, but not well enough to acquire the stock of knowledge that every educated person ought to have.

On the first day of beginning Latin I always taught the students the Latin names of the letters of the alphabet and showed them how to sound out Latin words. The practice of sounding out a word was obviously completely new to most of them. It seems safe to conclude that no one had ever taught them the relations between sounds and letters in English. No wonder they were poor readers.

For the last ten years I have made my living by preparing road, street, and bridge reports for counties and towns in northeast Nebraska. This work has brought me into contact with dozens of functional illiterates in the employ of local governments and engineering firms. These are the people who did not even try to get into college. Over and over again I have seen bright, industrious people who cannot read the simplest paragraph in a technical manual or a note on a set of construction plans, who cannot write a short report on the inspection of a bridge or construction site or a brief description of the repairs to a piece of machinery. As white, small-town Nebraskans they have never known the grinding poverty of the urban slums or the cruelty of racial prejudice. English is their mother tongue and they speak it fluently. They just can't read and write. No one has ever taught them how to sound out a word. When they try to read, they just look at the first letter or letters of a word and guess at the rest of it, usually incorrectly. Their spelling is completely haphazard, so that they themselves, after a week's time, cannot read what they have written.

In high school, college, and graduate school, I learned to read German, French, Latin, and Greek. My teachers began instruction in each language by teaching the relations between sounds and letters. This was especially important in Greek, which has a different alphabet, but that alphabet is no more puzzling to the college freshman than our alphabet is to the child in kindergarten. If no one had taught me the relations between the sounds of Greek and the letters of the Greek alphabet, I would have had to figure out those relations for myself, or else remain as illiterate in Greek as millions of Americans are in English--and for the same reason--the necessary facts had not been taught.

In graduate school I took two very good courses in linguistics, learning about the three kinds of writing systems: (1) alphabetic, in which each symbol, generally speaking, stands for a sound; (2) syllabic, in which each symbol stands for a syllable: and (3) ideographic, in which each symbol represents a concept or word. English has an alphabetic writing system, but in most schools, children are taught to read as if the writing system were ideographic. This is absurd, it should never have been expected to work, and in fact it is not working.

Some ignoramuses make light of the problem of illiteracy on the grounds that computers will somehow make it less necessary to be able to read. Nothing could be further from the truth. For the last two years I have been taking courses in computer programming. In nearly all business uses of the computer, the user communicates with the computer by means of a typewriter keyboard, that is, by writing; and the computer responds by putting a message on a terminal screen for the user to read. What will the functional illiterate do in this setting? There is even less room for him or her in computer programming. In a programming language, COBOL, for example, certain words are reserved for use solely as statements of the language, and if the programmer misspells one of them, the program will not run. Other words are names invented by the programmer for items of data. Such a name must be spelled the same way every time it is used or the program will not run.

I would like to close with a few facts about the education of my grandfathers. My father's father grew up in the backwoods of Oregon in the 1880's. His school was in session only three months out of the year, and he dropped out after the third grade. All his adult life he read a newspaper every day. He could read anything you put in front of him and wrote without hesitation. His spelling, though sometimes unorthodox, was phonetic; you never had to guess at a word that he had written. My mother's father was born in Germany and brought to this country as an infant. His parents spoke only German at home. He walked into the first grade without knowing a word of English, and his teacher knew no German. He learned to speak, read, and write English with ease.

My grandfathers learned to read and write in a short time because they were taught by the right method. The look and say method was not yet in use in those days. Think how different it would be today. First an attempt would be made to teach them to read by the look and say method. The illiteracy which would very likely result would be blamed on poor attendance or cultural deprivation, and a remedial program would be started for them. They still might spend thirteen years in school and come out unable to read and write. I know our schools can do better because they have done better in the past. Congress can help by seeing that reliable information gets to teachers and parents.

Thank you very much for allowing me to submit these remarks.

Very truly yours,

Sidney A. Saunders

Sidney A. Saunders, Ph.D.

cc: Senator Zorinsky (w/encl)

1805 Parker Circle, Apartment F
Norfolk, Nebraska 68701
March 24, 1986

The Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Hawkins,

The near-illiteracy of millions of Americans is a fact, but one so bizarre that it may gain belief only with great difficulty. I shall do my best to convince you and others of it, and I beg you not to be like my parents and so many other people of their generation. I kept trying to tell them how bad things were, but like most Americans, they talked only to people they knew well who were like themselves, and listened only to what they wanted to hear. It was not until my mother moved to a retirement complex after my father's death - a complex where approximately three-fourths of the people were retired teachers - that it was finally brought home to her how bad things were. And if you doubt the seriousness of the problem, especially among whites, I urge you to talk with some retired white and black teachers who had taught both before and after the introduction of the Look-Say method which has caused 90% of the problem.

I wish to stress more than anything else that INTEGRATION DID NOT CAUSE THIS PROBLEM. THE METHOD CAUSED IT. The reason I can say this is very simple: the method caught on at least a decade BEFORE the 1954 Supreme Court decision on integration. And the reason I know that is that when I walked into my first-grade classroom in 1944 the Look-Say method was already in use; and you better believe that at that time there were exactly as many black children in that white school as there were Martians. There were NO black children in white schools anywhere in the South (mine was in Clarksdale, Mississippi) and precious few anywhere else. (Luckily I had learned to read at home, which is one of the reasons why I know the literates from the illiterates.) Again, if you don't believe this chronology, ask some retired teachers!

Later, from 1963 to 1974, first in Maine and then in Louisiana, I taught the products of this method, again mostly whites, and became familiar with some of its God-awful aspects. One of the things that really drives you up the wall with these students is that they just guess at words they don't recognize.

(These were college students - St. Francis College, Biddeford, Maine, and LSU-Baton Rouge - but it makes little difference because they had always behaved that way and probably always will.) They didn't guess at words because they'd done poorly in reading class; they were TAUGHT to guess at words, and taught that everyone does! They couldn't sound out words because they had no idea what sounds the different letters stood for.

In a word of any length they would look at the first part only and guess at the rest. For instance, if the word they were confronted with was manifestly they would try manifesto, manufacture, or manifold, and you were lucky if you didn't hear municipal or magnetic.

One hears a great deal today about the failure of American schools to teach foreign languages. It's impossible. If students look only at the beginnings of words and never the endings what European language could you possibly teach them ? French, German, Russian, Spanish, Italian - they all use changes in the endings of words as markers for time, person speaking, person spoken to, reality vs. surmise, and many other notions the student must get to understand what he/she is reading. But the student taught by the look-say method will never know the muchachos from the muchachas!

Another thing about the look-say method is that, since the method has small use for individual letters, the students taught this way memorize the alphabet late, or not at all. This means they can't look anything up in:

phone books
dictionaries
encyclopedias
Dictionaries of This
Encyclopedias of That
card catalogs
library shelves arranged alphabetically by author

and a dozen other reference sources. Most of those who get to university level can limp through about a dozen listings which is little indeed compared to what they should be able to do. The result is what we see all around us: a nation of ignoramuses. Misspelled, misplurализed, misconjugated words not only on handmade grocery-store signs but in the pages of prestigious newspapers, magazines, and books. Don't bother asking why the perpetrators didn't look the words up in a dictionary. They couldn't have done so.

Again, in closing, I beg you not to shrug this problem off, not to say, "I don't wanna hear about it," not to disbelieve because disbelief is so easy. If you meet a child who's learning to read by the look-say method, see if he or she can read a simple newspaper or magazine story. If the child is very young, see how many words she/he can pick out. With high school kids, think: how well could this person do on the job with an instruction manual and no teacher?

And, again talk to teachers who have taught children during both the reign of phonics and the reign of the look-say method. You may get the horrors, but I hope you will do more than that. I hope you will ACT NOW - before Japan gets all the good jobs.

Sincerely,
Vivian S. Saunders
Vivian S. Saunders (Mrs. Sidney A. Saunders)

15626 Pleasant Dr.
Allen Park, MI 48101
April 1, 1986

Repres. Augustus S. Hawkins
House of Representative
Rayburn Bldg. Rm. B. - 346 C
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Repres. Hawkins:

Enclosed is my testimony which I wish to give in support of Senator Zorkinsky's bill on the National Commission on the Illiteracy Act.

Please support this bill..

This testimony is made available for inclusion in the record of the illiteracy hearings of 3/20/86.

Your support of this bill is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lucille Diehl

Lucille Diehl

15626 Pleasant Dr.
Allen Park, MI 48101
(313) 386-2414
April 1, 1986

Statement by Lucille Diehl
before the
Subcommittee on Elimentry,
Secondary and Vocational
Education.

My name is Lucille Diehl

I live in Allen Park, Michigan

I have a degree from the University of Detroit with a major in Accounting and a minor in Education and Economics.

I'm a grandmother of 4 granddaughters . . . and counting!

For the last 8 years, I've worked as a substitute teacher in Jr. and Sr. High Schools for two downriver area school districts: Southgate and Taylor.

As a sub-teacher, I've taught at every level from 7th through 12 grade, covering most subjects. I want to testify about abuses occurring in our educational systems: abuses of authority assumed by educators through the neglect of parental vigilance. What I report is not hearsay: I've personally witnessed and experienced these events.

The students that I meet are the tattle-tale consequence of their earlier teaching-learning experience; the result of the elementary educational portion of our school system, wherein values clarification and sex-education programs are insidiously incorporated within subjects of various titles that tend to deceive parents (whether on purpose or not) regarding the content of the class.

These values clarification and sex-education programs have one purpose or goal: to change the moral values of our youth . . . our forthcoming generations of adult citizens . . . into self-centered, humanistic, satanic-oriented values.

What most God-oriented people accept as absolute truth with projected moral values, is taught to our children as subjective values. These subjective values alter their attitudes toward family, (the very foundation of our society) and the sex role (the interrelationship between men and women) to expect throughout their lives.

Each person's learning should be a life-long experience. The ability to communicate is essential to this life-long learning experience. Comprehensive reading and writing are primary means of individual communication. Reading and writing is not being effectively taught in the primary grades. We are graduating functional and marginal illiterates from our high schools because our children are not able to comprehensively read their high school textbooks. This is the result of the "Look-Say" approach to reading, wherein students are taught to recognize the meaning of whole words and phrases, rather than learning the alphabet and phonics. The "Look-Say" method is comparable to teaching the Chinese language which has no alphabet.

By the time students reach the 6th grade this "Look-Say" method has produced a sizable percentage of students that educators label "learning disabled" . . . i.e., slow learners, dyslexic, emotionally impaired, etc. These students are grouped into "Special Education" classes that comprise about 1/3 of a total student classes.

Within the 2 school districts I serve, too many Jr-High students cannot read, write, spell or perform basic math (i.e., addition, subtraction, multiplication and division).

Each succeeding year that I substitute, I witness the academic and behavorial changes in the students . . . many students I've come to recognize from previous grades. The numbers of slow-learners, emotionally-impaired, etc. (students lacking proper levels of basic skills) increase and "Special Education" classes grow.

Meanwhile, the minds of these students are infiltrated with sex-education wherein basic moral values are changed or eliminated; the majority of parents and church officals are unaware of this. They blindly trust the teachers.

Students are taught in depth about sex, abortion and subjective values such as "doing your own thing" . . . family values are destroyed. They are taught to enjoy adult privileges without accepting the accompanying responsibility.

For example:

Most people would perceive the subject matter of Home Economics class as cooking, sewing, home decoration, etc.; i.e., various aspects of practical family life. But most Home Economic classes I sub in are classes teaching child-development which includes methods of birth control, including abortion. I clearly recall finding a book entitled "Abortion" on the teacher's desk of an 11th-12th grade "sewing class". The lesson plan for that day was taken from this book. Please note:

The subject of abortion is bad enough; however, this book subjectively favored abortion! It did not tell students of the physical and moral dangers of abortion, only when and how to seek an abortion. One got the idea that abortion was as natural as getting your hair cut . . . an easy, natural process!

When I asked students how many of their parents knew what was being taught, I opened a pandora's box; students defended teaching of the subject, some volunteering that they have already had abortions ..... the question repeatedly asked of me was, "What would you do if your daughter got pregnant?

Obviously, these students were programmed to accept sex-without-responsibility; to abort when the natural result of sex occurred.

Similar experiences have occurred to me dozens of times: the result of diminished moral values and subsequent attitudes being taught in our school systems. Many girls see no problem having sex with boys they like. A few years ago, one high school had 27 pregnant students . . . their pregnancies being freely discussed by their peers: no shame; no secrets; just a way of life.

When students are taught sex and immoral values, starting at grade school levels, what more would any knowledgable person expect? There is no embarrassment among students: they freely kiss and embrace in the halls . . . often "French kissing" and fondling their "tushs" as though they were "making out." It's a common sight. Teachers see this . . . there is no disciplinary action!

Social Study, Psychology and Sociology classes . . . they're all a brainwash, geared to destroy the family unit. They also destroy our concept of free-enterprise, directly or indirectly teaching students to depend upon our government. Our concept of government as a republic is being replaced by a socialistic concept . . . the welfare concept of society is being fostered in our tax-supported school systems. Equality of men and women, in every aspect, is being taught. Most thinking, objective people will recognize this as impossible. What is the result of this? More often, it's the girls who try to imitate the life-style of men as they perceive it. What do you think this type of study-program does to a girl's self-image; her ego; her value of self? It's devastating!

You are probably aware of a program called IN-SERVICE TRAINING for teachers. This program embraces most, if not all, subjects. Periodically throughout the school year, teachers are scheduled away from their regular classes to attend In-Service training classes. One program I read was for a Biology class. The booklet was developed by Karla Atkinson of the office of Sex Equity in Education: Lansing, MI. I want to quote from the introduction of this booklet: (quote) "This booklet focuses specifically on only one major change which our society has witnessed: the roles of women and men in the home and in the work place. This booklet presents Selected facts and information that collectively challanges many of the sterotyped prescriptions our society has held about these roles. Further, this information is applied to the classroom which, in theory, is a laboratory for learning. Certainly students learn facts and polish academic skills in this laboratory. Yet students also begin even in kindergarden 'practicing' for adult roles as men and women." (unquote)

Let me illustrate how a biology teacher would apply In-Service training, using this booklet.

On one page of this booklet, the teacher is presented certain "facts" . . . followed by a list of questions geared to prepare the student's mind to accept these "facts" and how to use them. For example, one "fact" would read: (quote) "Women will be increasingly employed outside the home for some period of time in their lives." (unquote) Then a table is given showing increasing numbers of women in the workforce between the years 1960 through 1982; from 23 million to 48 million. Another "fact" would read: (quote) "Women will continue to earn less than men. On the average, they will earn 59¢ for every dollar." (unquote) Then a table is given showing male and female earnings for the years 1960 through 1981 for comparison.

The teacher is now given Check-Out questions to ask students, such as:

1) How many of you have both parents working outside of the home?
   Only one parent outside the home?

2) Do you know what jobs pay better than others?

The teacher is asked to judge the student's response as having positive or negative values about certain jobs and how to determine the approach to change these attitudes.

Now . . . lest you forgot . . . all this is occurring in a Biology class! I see this as an effort to alter our God-given values and natures into acceptance of a society fostering sexual equality: the main object of life being money. How else would you interpret it?

Last . . . but not least . . . I want to call attention to the DEATH-type programs in our schools.

Recently, in an 8th grade Social Studies class, the teacher left a video tape for the day's lesson plan. The video scenario depicted a class of high-school senior boys and girls, who were given assignments to work in pairs on a given project. The last to pair-off was a smart, "bookworm" type boy and a happy-go-lucky, athletic star.

The "bookworm" boy's parents were divorced; he lived with his mother; his father remarried a woman with a younger son. The athlete, whose twin brother had died, had a father who was a doctor and a socially busy mother.. His father thought highly of the dead twin; very little of the athlete. This athlete played dumb, but he was quite smart.

The video-tape scenario centered on these two boys planning to commit suicide . . . which they eventually attempted by running their car over a cliff. However, the "bookworm" [illegible] jumped out just before the car went over the cliff . . . the athlete died! A most depressing story wherein educators tell students that parents should pay more attention to their children. Aside from addressing the wrong audience, what was the purpose of the film prepared for classroom presentation?

If this seems confusing to you . . . consider the effect on students in this 8th grade class! They began discussing how they would commit suicide.

I question the educational value of this video . . . . what business does it have in a school curriculum?

I want to conclude by reminding this panel that every parent has the individual, God-given right and obligation to educate their children. Whatever power or authority the State, the school system, the teachers have-has been delegated to them by the parents of each child. When that authority is mis-used, abused and confused, the parents have the right (not the privilege) to withdraw their consent. If we allow the State under the strong, persistent lobbying efforts of the teacher unions to usurp this parental authority, we shall reap more of the whirlwind already engulfing our youth and our society . . . the future of our State and Country is at stake.

Our schools are no longer satisfied to teach the cognitive skills of science, art, communications and history . . . but are replacing them with the philosophy of God-forsaken humanism and the ideology of Socialism. Students moral values and attitudes are being purposely changed. Who said "religion" is absent from the classroom? It's time that parents' rights and the freedom to exercise their rights be recognized and honored by the State.

I might add . . . millions of dollars will have to be spent for remedial reading and "adult education" by colleges, government agencies, business and the armed forces to make these countless functional and marginal illiterates productive in our society! What a waste of our school-tax dollars and the minds they were to educate.

For those who question the objectivity of my testimony, I urge them to carefully read their children's (or grandchildren's) textbooks . . . even those attending private schools. Inquire daily what happened in the

Child's classrooms. Parenting is a full-time job of vigilance.

Through this testimony, I want to alert this subcommittee and parents to the role that our Governments have assumed in the educational process in the hope that these abuses will be corrected. We must do all in our power to preserve the sanctity and sanity of our children's minds and souls. You have an awesome, personal responsibility for the power you wield as government officials.

Through this hearing, I urge all who participate in our Federal and State governments to protect parent's God-given right to direct their children's education and, the freedom to practice this right without political encumbrance.

Lucille Diehl

Lucille Diehl, April 1, 1986

April 2, 1986

Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins, Chairman
Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary,
and Vocational Education
United States House of Representatives
Room B 346 C Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Honorable Augustus F. Hawkins,

Enclosed you will find a copy of my testimony to be inserted and included in the record of the illiteracy hearing of March 20, 1986.

Please submit this for the record.

I wholeheartedly support the Zorinsky legislation on illiteracy, since this is the basis for all learning. I look forward to hearing more on this in the future.

Sincerely,
Elaine Andruski

Elaine Andruski
30327 Pembroke
Warren, Mi. 48092

30327 Pembroke
Warren, Mi. 48092
Tel. (3.3) 751-4497

Statement by Elaine Andreski

before the

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON

ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

HONORABLE AUGUSTUS F. HAWKINS, CHAIRMAN

ROOM B 346 C RAYBURN BUILDING

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

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Honorable Chairman, committee members, ladies and gentlemen: It is a rare privelege to be able to address those responsible for passing laws that will affect the lives of the American people. Nothing in the annals of history has reached the deplorable situation we as a people are faced with as the problems of illiteracy, destruction of traditional values and violence that reflect the social change promoted by our educators over the past 30 years or so. As a parent of four children, all grown now, and parent activist for almost 20 years, I have witnessed first hand most of what my testimony includes. While my two older children have been "cheated" by the government schools, I must confess that I chose to take the situation into my own hands in 1977 by homeschooling the two younger ones. They are both working full time after their graduation from our home school and are presently attending Macomb County College on a part time basis. My Traditional Roman Catholic religious beliefs demanded no less from me.

In 1975 a research paper was written on "Parental Control Of Public School Curriculum," by Kenneth A. Schulman, a member of the St. Johns Law Review and the St. Thomas More Institute for Legal Research.

The study focused in on parents rights and where the line could be drawn regarding protests of curriculum. The report goes on to say, "It is well established that a parent cannot successfully avail himself of the use of the courts simply on the basis of a disagreement he may have with the curriculum as prescribed by the board of education or the state. The Supreme court has clearly pointed out that, "Courts do not and cannot intervene in the resolution of conflicts which arise in the daily operation of school systems and which do not directly and sharply implicate basic constitutional values. It may be concluded, therefore, that parents will fail in their challenges if their criticisms do not reach constitutional proportions of the constitutional infringement is justified by a greater state interest."

"Even where these constitutional rights have been violated, parents have still been denied the right to control the education of their children where a court finds that the state's interest in directing education is superior."

"Unless they resort to private schools or more effectively influence the public school boards on election day, the dissatisfied parent......will find that the right to control the education of their child stops at the school house gate."

The American educational system used to be the finest in the world. It trained young people to become useful and productive citizens, transmitting the values and standards of our forefathers to the younger generation.

The incredible sum of tax monies American's have poured into the system in recent years, has resulted in poor test results, with scholastic apptitude tests declining every year for the past 18 years. Diplomas are granted to students who cannot read, write, spell and do simple math problems. Many experts believe our system has been sabatogued. Our children have been defrauded of the basic tools of learning for which the parents paid a terrible price.

In far too many schools pupils are taught only what is wrong with America, discounting the fact that this benevolent nation has donated billions of dollars to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and educate others earning us the nickname, "breadbasket of the world." And our own criticize us for not having done enough. The truth is that our system has provided more political freedom and economic abundance to more people than any other nation in the world.

Aside from condemning our country, the failure to teach basic skills and fundamental truths has left a void that was ultimately filled with values clarification, a system of probing and changing the childs values by techniques such as violent and disturbing books, films and materials dealing with parental conflict, running away, death, drugs, murder, suicide, mental illness, poverty, despair and anger; or requiring the child to engage in role playing of death, pregnancy, abortion, anger, suicide and hate.

Personal evaluations and surveys which invade the private thoughts and acts of the child and his family are randomly used in whatever classes are found suitable. The deliberate attempt to make a child question his parents values via values clarification drives a psychological wedge between parent and child, while the latter adopts an autonomy unbeknown to that particular age group.

For the last 25 years, protests have been conducted on every scale imaginable from the four corners of the United States. Parents, who have tried to sue the school system in New York for malpractice, found themselves thrown out of court. Their son had graduated from high school an illiterate.

The 70's and 80's have ushered in, first, the religion of secular humanism as a philosophical base for our public school children, and second, the eastern occult, Hindu practices such as meditation, yoga and guided imagery as a means of reducing stress and improving motivation.

In other words our present day system of education has been reduced to a laboratory where behavioral psychology, using stimulus and response techniques that originally were used on dogs, rats and chickens. Operant conditioning, fathered by B.F. Skinner, the social engineer, has been adopted by almost every school in America. The Skinnerian mastery learning, used all over the country including Michigan will be officially welcomed by school boards and administrators soon as they present it to them at a conference to be held the first week of October, 1985, in Wayne Michigan. The present climate of teaching and administrative areas in Michigan leave no doubt in my mind that Mastery Learning will become the universal system of education incorporating operant conditioning under the guise of precision teaching, classroom management, structured learning and discipline.

For parents who were alerted to these dangers long ago, what became known as the Hatch Amendment was finally a vehicle or tool to be used to put an end to the experiments being conducted on a captive audience, the school children of America. The change agents who boast of radically altering the morals and values of our children could finally be confronted.

"In 1965 congress gave the notorious NEA what it wanted, the Elementary and Secondary Act, a virtual key to the Federal treasury," says Sam Blumenfeld in "NEA: TROJAN HORSE IN AMERICAN EDUCATION." This bill was originally created for the alleged purpose of conpensatory educational programs for the "emotionally disadvantaged," Title 1. However, it also created many other categorical programs providing funding for such things as library services Title II, Exemplary elementary and secondary school programs, (experimental programs) Title III, state departments of education title V, and bilingual education title VII.

Almost immediately government publications such as Pacesetters in Innovation, became available that would change the approach to education from the cognitive (intellect) area to the affective (feelings and emotions), behavioral in nature. The phenomenal growth of Federal intrusion began to be felt from coast to coast but few parents had even the faintest idea of the revolution taking place. The pacesetters direction was to organize the process of change to reorganize and restructure the entire school system. Teachers were subject to sensitivity training and change agents training through in service training, not only to condition the teachers to new philosophies, but to spread their influence to others in their own districts and throughout the state by way of various visition programs.

The result was structured and graded classes being systematically phased out and replaced by ungraded individualized instruction (B-STEP), subject to a pre-conceived mold or norm by computerized assessment called PPBS, (National Curriculum). The teacher then became a facilitator or clinician, monotoring the cycling and recycling of attitudinal changes in the student.

A lone voice in congress, that of the Honorable Earl F. Landgrebe, a congressman from Indiana, voiced his objection to the extension of the ESEA Act that would carry it through 1978. His pleas were ignored as he raised four crucial issues that were never addressed; 1. Federal control, 2. parental rights, 3. content of educational programs and 4. results of such. An evaluation was conducted by the American Institute for Research (AIR) in March, 1972 and concluded that "participants in Title I programs gained less during the period of instruction than non-participants and consequently fell further behind their non-participants (non federally funded) peers and national norms. Other studies also indicated that the 13 billion spent under ESEA hadn't resulted in any educational improvement. Since its effectiveness as a federal program had failed, congressman Landgrebe proposed HR10639 to phase out the ESEA within 4 years and grant local control to school districts once again, also prohibiting psychotherapy techniques, forced teacher membership in unions and restricting title programs to the cognitive area only.

It wasn't surprising that his bill didn't pass, but one man alone is no match for the socialist majority in the legislature.

The courageous lawmaker from Indiana was defeated in his fourth bid for office and the American people experience a terrible loss.

A brief attempt was made to rid our schools of experimental programs with the introduction of the Hatch Amendment, 1978 but because no regulations were issued at this time, it proved to be an ineffective piece of legislation, not worth the paper it was printed on. Since that time, regulations have been issued, but the final rules exclude any professional input regarding complaints against Federal programs. Since nonacademic courses are the only programs affected, the academic courses will be immune from prosecution and teachers can have a field day in such classes. This amounts to a slap in the face of all those parents who traveled great distances at their own expense to testify at the Hatch hearings.

The damage done to the teaching progession can only be repaired by the teachers themselves now, by upgrading its own standards of character and rebelling against their own leadership. Teachers claim they are victims of abuse yet they fail to recognize that parents were the first victims of educational battle fatigue - for us there was no place to turn for help.

I would like to conclude this testimony by asking you to assist Senator Zorinsky by supporting his legislation, the National Commission on Illiteracy Act. Timing is crucial, we've got no time to lose. Millions of young people have already been affected and our country cannot afford any more twisted minds. Since reading lies at the heart of all learning, this is an excellent place to start.

Remember, a nation cannot remain free and illiterate at the same time. Parents must regain control over their children and the institutions they support to teach their offspring. James J. Kilpatrick the conservative columnist, wrote in a 1978 column, "I get angry letters from parents about these bizarre incidents, but I don't get nearly enough angry letters. Parents are too docile, dumb or brainwashed. We ought to get mad at the behavioral boys who would cure our children of non-existent illnesses. And we ought to stay mad." I couldn't agree with him more.